



Endless

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Vacation

A Great Adventure

South Africa has something
for everyone

KDN PPS 1356/3/2006

Inside: • Eating & Shopping in Bangkok • WIN a Free Holiday

Inside Front Cover

High Res PDF from RCI

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Cover picture courtesy of South African Tourism

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1 week =

Do you still have your holiday week in hand?

If you do, deposit it **EARLY** to enjoy:

- Higher trading power
- More holiday options
- Wider choice of destinations
- Better choice than members with less trading power

Remember, you can deposit your Holiday Week with RCI up to 2 years in advance. So if you have yet to deposit the Week you own in 2006 with us, make sure you do so now.

And here's another very important reason why you should deposit your Week today:

The early bird catches the worm.

So wait no more, call RCI today to deposit your Week.

Call your RCI Guide on **(65) 6223 4333** or your country's toll-free number to deposit your Week.

Deposit your
2006 Week between
1 February and 31 March
2006 and stand a chance to
win an Asian Getaway*
worth up to S\$339!

* Accommodation only

 RCI®

Dear Member

Here at RCI, our team is gearing up for an exciting year!

2005 ended on a high note when our RCI Asia call centre, which is headquartered in Singapore, was chosen as the 2005 Silver winner for Best Singapore Call Centre, and the Bronze winner for the Best Call Centre in the region (Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore). We were chosen by a panel of international call centre experts representing the Contact Centre Association of Singapore, and their findings were audited by Ernst and Young. Read more about the awards under the "RCI News" section.

In 2006, we have many goodies in store for you. Based on member feedback, we will be expanding our rental options exponentially. Did you know that you now have access to preferential rates at more than 20,000 hotels and resorts worldwide? This includes new destinations such as Macau, San Francisco, New York and Paris, to name a few.

In addition to new options for hotels and resorts, you can now experience safari lodges in South Africa, through our tie-up with South Africa National Parks! Please read our South Africa feature for more information and watch out for updates on other new vacation experiences in future issues of the magazine! This year, we have also expanded our business development team so that we can bring in new resort affiliations in highly demanded destinations.



In line with the feedback and suggestions we receive from members, for the next issue of Endless Vacation, we will be updating the look and feel of the magazine. Don't forget to send us your vacation photos and stories so that we can share them in future issues.

I would like to wish all of you a prosperous 2006 and encourage you to make this the year that you live out your vacation dreams with your friends and family! The RCI team is here to help – we are just a phone call away.

Esther Friend

Esther Friend
Director of Operations, Asia

RCI Fees for 2006

Exchange Fee		Member-ship Fee*		Full Week Getaway Specials		Split Week Getaway Specials	
International Exchange	S\$388	1 Year	S\$150	International Getaway		Weekend – 4D/3N	
Intra-Asia Exchange	S\$175	3 Years	S\$360	(2 - 365 days in advance) from	S\$499	(Selected Asia Resorts)	from S\$179
Domestic Exchange	S\$148	5 Years	S\$500	Asia Getaway		Midweek – 5D/4N	
Weekend Exchange – 4D/3N				(31 - 365 days in advance) from	S\$ 99	(Selected Asia Resorts)	from S\$149
(Selected Asia Resorts)	S\$119			11th Hour Deal		Guest Certificate	S \$70
Midweek Exchange – 5D/4N				(2 - 30 days in advance) from	S\$ 79		
(Selected Asia Resorts)	S\$ 79						

Find out the latest promotional prices of RCI Getaway Specials

Call RCI and ask our Guides. Alternatively, log on to our website at www.rci-asia.com for updated rates.

All prices quoted are correct at the time of printing and are subject to change without prior notice. *Subject to GST charges for Singapore members

RCI Asia's Member Services Department will be open on the following Public Holidays in 2006

14 April 2006	Good Friday	9am – 6pm	9 August 2006	National Day	9am – 6pm
1 May 2006	Labour Day	9am – 6pm	21 October 2006	Deepavali	9am – 1pm
12 May 2006	Vesak Day	9am – 6pm			



Memories of good times le

My daughter found a new friend
at a safari park at Chengshangtou,
Weihai City, Shangdong Province

Gao Weiyi
678500352



Touching nose and kissing
a dolphin at Discover Cove
in Orlando.

Yap Hoong Hin
602901394

Your Photo Details

Complete and attach this form (photocopies accepted) together with your pictures and send them to us.

Name: _____

Home Country: _____

RCI Membership No: _____ Date of Picture: _____

Brief Explanation of Picture: _____

All prints and slides should have been taken while on holiday with RCI.

All prints and slides will be considered the property of *Endless Vacation* and will not be returned.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

The personal information collected on this form will only be used to conduct this competition and is consistent with the RCI Privacy Policy.

1st PRIZE

A week's International Holiday
for 4 people

2nd PRIZE

Midweek Getaway – Asia*

3rd PRIZE

RCI Goodie Bag

*Accommodation only

Each member can send a maximum of 5 entries • Entries via email are welcome • Each entry must be accompanied by a write-up of not more than 50 words and should mention the location where the photograph was taken • All entries must have the member's name and RCI Membership Number on the back • Please do not staple or pin the prints • All prints and slides will be considered the property of RCI Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd and will not be returned • RCI reserves the right to publish these photographs in any of its publications

Please write "RCI Magic Memories" on the envelope and mail your entry before 31 May 2006 to:
The Editor, *Endless Vacation*, RCI Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd, 8 Cross Street, #09-01/05 PWC Building, Singapore 048424
Or email: asiamembers@rciap.com



ad you to prized moments



Little boy's dream
come true between
the teeth of a giant
Trex in Orlando's
Disney World.
James Paoelli
350200602



Our drunken snowman at Schloss
Grubhof in Salzburg, Austria.
Doris Chai Fong Yin
286806597



A Great Adventure

South Africa has something for everyone. **Suna Kanga** gives an overview of a land with incredible vacation options.

Two weeks in South Africa gave me the joy of traversing a wild, sun-drenched landscape, being in a pristine environment where animals roam free, sipping wine in an old Dutch homestead, savouring exotic cuisine and looking down on Cape Town from the awe-inspiring Table Land at sunset.

South Africa is a land with incredible options, one that has risen from the realm of isolation and the grip of apartheid and ivory hunters to become an attractive tourist destination.



Cape Town

The gods were smiling when I winged into magical Cape Town, one of the world's most unforgettable cities. Proudly sprawled on the southern tip of Africa, where the Indian and Atlantic oceans converge, the tourism capital of South Africa reveals a beautiful mix of colonial and contemporary architecture along an undulating coastline. It is a city of immense beauty with a lively cultural scene, trendy waterfront, glorious beaches, colony of penguins, Dutch style

wineries amidst miles of vineyards and the glorious Cape of Good Hope.

Table Mountain, the town's most arresting feature, kept me at bay as dark clouds rolled in to play hide-and-seek over the city. As cable cars stop operating when the wind is too strong, I set out instead to discover cosmopolitan Cape Town, the legislative capital of South Africa. I visited the meticulously preserved Parliament House, cobbled Malay Quarter and wound up at Victoria & Albert Waterfront, a lively complex of boutiques, cafes and luxury hotels. From the marina, there are tours to Robben Island, the infamous goal for political prisoners, where Nelson Mandela spent several years. The windswept island is now home to the world-renowned Robben Island Museum.



Table Mountain



© South African Tourism

© South African Tourism

© South African Tourism

© South African Tourism

On a sunny day, I took a 30-km drive to the Cape of Good Hope along a heaving ocean road dotted with seafood restaurants and souvenir shops. The wind picked up as I visited the wild, rocky headland, Cape of Good Hope and Cape Point just 1 km away. Both the capes are spectacular and with the wind whipping up the frothy waves, the mood was magical.

You can also take excursions to Boulders Beach, a beach for windsurfers and kite-surfers (September to February), and a delightful place to watch a colony of penguins. Particularly rewarding was a trip into the scenic wine country where blue skies, green vineyards and purple mountains made a spectacular setting for the gabled manor houses with a fascinating history that went back to the 1700s. Fine dining at restaurants here adds to the immensely enjoyable excursion.

Table Mountain beckoned in full glory as I returned along the coastal road. Its steep slopes were getting a final rinse of sunset hues as my cable car made the steep ascent. Far below, the city lights twinkled amidst a landscape that changed from purple pink to navy blue.



Kruger National Park

Kruger National Park, one of South Africa's greatest natural treasures, came alive as I entered the southern Malelane Gate. The park, bordering Mozambique, stretches 350km from north to south and 60km from west to east. Established in 1898, the flagship of South African national parks is unique for its unparalleled diversity of wild animals, birds and plants. Eco-

tourism and the archaeological sites of Masorini and Thulamela together draw about a million visitors annually.

A world leader in advanced environmental management techniques, Kruger serves as a laboratory for 147 species of mammals, 507 bird species, 114 reptilian species, 49 fish species and 336 types of trees. Within the waters of this grand ecosystem are also 3,000 hippos and many crocodiles. The vast savanna is home to 1,500 lions, 900 leopards, 300 cheetahs, 90,000 Impala antelopes, 30,000 zebras, 15,000 buffaloes, 5,000 giraffes,



© South African Tourism

Tour bus and giraffes at the Kruger National Park

EV Tip: South Africans are casual in manner and do not like to rush decisions. The handshake is a common greeting. *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa* by Dean Foster offers good tips.

8,000 elephants and about 300 rhinoceros. Little wonder my game rides were invariably rewarding. The cool, rainless season, (April to September), is a good time to view animals forced to emerge to seek water supply. Summer (October to March), when migratory birds arrive to breed, trees blossom in the

veld and antelope drop their young, has its own charm.

Skukuza, Kruger's capital, has an excellent information centre. Accommodation options in the park include camp sites with communal kitchen, safari tents, bungalows and cottages with kitchens. Daily air services link the park with Johannesburg, Nelspruit, Durban and other cities, and plans are underway to construct an airport within Kruger. I took a 50-minute flight to Nelspruit from where I was transported by Land Rover. By road, the 400-km trip from Johannesburg would have taken about five hours.



Addo Elephants

From Bongani, located at an elevation of 1,300m within Methetomusha Game Reserve, I surveyed the magnificence of South Africa's natural environment: serene yet secretive, rugged yet accessible. On nearby mountains are remnants of bush paintings made 400 to 500 years ago. Here, centuries ago, Dravidians from India arrived to prospect for gold and left when the winds were favourable to carry them back.

Rangers made sure I got my share of thrills on twice-a-day game rides. Each trip was a fascinating game of hide-and-seek between man and animals, and my trophies were encounters to talk about and memories to take home. With "Boy" balanced on the pointer's seat over the front wheel, I sighted impala, kudu, giraffe, zebra, wildebeest and warthog.

"Never turn your back on animals in the bush," cautioned my guide. A game ride at Bongani turned exciting when news was received of a leopard being sighted. By now I had seen four of the Big Five. "Hang on folks, I'm going to fly," said our guide, thundering through the veld, whipping branches, crunching gravel and jumping streams in a thrilling chase. But the leopard had disappeared.

Disappointed, I settled for chilled sundowners and a snack of biltong (air-dried deer meat). Suddenly, a spotlight sweeping the terrain revealed a leopard! Vehicles closed in, cameras clicked, the star of the show had his moment in the limelight – and my

name made it into the Big Five Book of sightings. Back at the camp, preparations were underway for a popular South African pastime, a barbecue or "braie". Cooking aromas wafted from a reed enclosure called the "bomo" where crocodile, impala and spicy sausages (boerwors) were sizzling on hot coal. Kruger is an immensely rewarding experience wherever one decides to stay.



Addo Elephant National Park

The road out of Cape Town – popularly called the Garden Route – leads to the coastal city of Port Elizabeth on the Eastern Cape. Just an hour north, in the Sundays River Valley near the Zuurbera Range, the Addo Elephant National Park is one of the best locations to view the world's largest mammal.

There is no creature in Africa quite as dramatic and regal as the elephant in the wild, each weighing 7 tons and standing 4m high. Addo's evergreen bush not only supports about 420 elephants, but also 450 Cape buffalo, black rhino, antelope and the unique flightless dung beetle, (found exclusively in Addo). Together, they ensure a grand wildlife experience.

An exciting transformation is underway to expand the park into a 360,000 hectare Greater Addo Park – an ultimate tourism destination where the Big Seven (elephant, rhino, lion, buffalo, leopard, whales and the great white sharks) will be seen in their natural habitat. It is advisable to call ahead as the park may close during heavy rainfall which makes the dirt roads impassable. Addo Elephant National Park is one of 20 national parks run by South Africa National Parks (SANParks).



Mapungubwe National Park

Proclaimed a National Heritage Site, scenic Mapungubwe National Park is a recently opened park of great cultural and archaeological importance. Strategically located far north, at the confluence of the Shashe and Limpopo Rivers, the park offers spectacular views of three countries – South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe. The closest city, Musina, is about 60km away.

The sanctuary for endangered large mammals, such as the black-and-white rhinoceros, the African elephant and other predators, is an area of invaluable discoveries. Exceptional testimony exists of an ancient civilisation straddling the two rivers where Arabian, Indian and Chinese merchants traded in gold, ivory, animal hides, glass beads and ceramics. The sophisticated trading centre thrived from around 1200 to 1300AD. The ruins are evidence of the first and greatest ever South African kingdom.



Cape Sugarbird



Lost City at Sun City

Treasures unearthed here include a gold rhinoceros and gold bowl.

Park attractions include the Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape which was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2003. For bird-lovers, the 28,000-hectare park has 400 species of birds nesting within some of the largest trees in the country, among them 24 acacia species.



Sun City

About three hours from Johannesburg, within a desert landscape, a wildly different experience awaits visitors. Set amidst the stark ruggedness of mountains and bushveld, dazzling Sun City is the Las Vegas of southern Africa. Combining fact with fantasy, Sun City has palatial hotels, glitzy casinos, gourmet restaurants, spectacular golf courses, cascading water gardens and fun rides which together draw about 25,000 visitors a day.

Devotees of South Africa's Sun City are thrilled by the sprawling complex's incredible ability to amuse and entertain. Imaginative architecture, animal motifs, rock carvings, fountains and statuary come together in a swirling cocktail labelled Fun City. The gargantuan resort was inspired by a legendary Lost City that was said to have existed on the site of an ancient volcano that was ruined by eruptions, abandoned and "rediscovered" by the genius of tourism, Sol Kerzner who "restored" the city.

This is a city for all ages, one that never sleeps. Delightful escapism is offered at the exhilarating Valley of Waves, Lazy River Ride, Bridge of Time, Hall of Treasures and Dream Machine. Sun City is a popular venue for international beauty contests, million-dollar golf challenges, and entertainment by famous stars and striptease artistes.

Water-skiing, parasailing and sunset cruises can be enjoyed at the Waterworld. Tennis, squash, swimming, golf, mountain biking, horse riding and jogging can be enjoyed year round because of good weather. For golf addicts, there are two courses. The Gary Player Country Club is home to the prestigious Nedbank Golf Challenge while the 18-hole Lost City Golf Course comes with spectacular bushveld views and 38 real crocodiles at the 13th hole. Not surprisingly golf carts are compulsory at this unique resort!

Africa remains unsurpassed in its ability to surprise visitors. Be it the fascinating diversity of people, the unlimited sightseeing options and the excellent infrastructure for tourism, the "rainbow nation" is not just a travel destination, it is a great adventure.

TRAVEL TIPS

Airports: South Africa has three international airports: Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. Domestic hubs are Kimberley, Upington, Bloemfontein, East London, Port Elizabeth, George, Nelspruit and Richards Bay.

Visas: Visitors require a passport that is valid for at least six months. Visitors from Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Thailand do not require visas for 30-day visits. Japanese are among those exempt from visa requirements. Evidence of financial means and return or onward tickets are required for visas. Remember to get multiple entry visas if you are planning to travel to neighbouring countries.

Immunisation: No international immunisation is required. Yellow fever vaccination certificates are needed for visitors travelling from infected countries and should be obtained 4 to 6 weeks before travel. Malaria tablets, insect repellents and long-sleeved evening wear are advised as precautionary measures against malaria in the Kruger National Park, the Mpumalanga and Limpopo lowveld, and northern KwaZulu in summer.

Population: The population of "the rainbow nation" is diverse. Of approximately 46 million South Africans, 79.4 per cent are black, 9.3 per cent white (of Afrikaaner and British descent), 8.8 per cent coloured or mixed race, and 2.5 per cent of Indian or Asian descent. The six major ethnic groups are Afrikaner, Coloured/Cape Malay, Bantu, English, Chinese and Indian.

Languages: There are 11 official languages (Afrikaans, Xhosa, Ndebele, Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, Swati, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda and Zulu). Most locals speak English and Afrikaans, which is derived from their Dutch heritage. Asians, mostly Indian and Chinese, are largely English speaking. In larger hotels, some staff can speak French, German and Italian.

Currency: Rand (Zar). One rand equals 100 cents. US\$1 = approximately 6.16 Zar.

Electricity: 220/230 volts AC at 50 cycles per second. Three-pronged plugs are universal so keep an adapter. Hotel rooms may have 110 volts outlets for shavers.

Water: In major cities and in most game reserves, the tap water is purified. Being mineral rich, it may cause temporary gastric distress. Bottle mineral water is readily available. In the Cape area, water contains humic acid which tends to give it a reddish colour, which is harmless.

Standard Time: Standard time is two hours in advance of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT + 2).

Getting Around: South Africa has excellent roads for long-distance travel and a good domestic airline network. As public transportation in poor urban areas can be dangerous, it is advisable to rent a car with a driver.

Tipping: About 10 per cent for taxis and 10 to 15 per cent in restaurants.

Tax Refunds: Visitors can claim a VAT refund if they spend a minimum of R250 on goods intended for export. You can claim the amount before leaving the country.

Essential Items to Pack: Walking shoes, sunglasses, medication and insect repellent.

Safety: Crime exists so basic precautions are advised. Try not to stand out as a tourist in the way you dress. Conceal cameras, and avoid wearing jewellery and expensive watches. Leave passports in the hotel safe and carry small amounts of cash. Remain calm and cooperative if confronted. Avoid crowds, street vendors and develop a sense of awareness of what is going on around you.

The Blue Train: The famous train continues a tradition of deluxe travel between Pretoria, Cape Town and Victoria Falls. A great journey!

Useful Websites: www.southafrica.info, www.sanparks.org, www.cape-town.org, www.bluetrain.co.za.



© South African National Parks



© South African National Parks



© Monkeyland



© Thornybush Game Reserve



© South African National Parks

Game for a Safari Adventure?

Want to experience an adventure in the wilderness of South Africa? Here's a Great Opportunity – from only **S\$100*** a night for a two-person occupancy, it can't get any better!

RCI offers accommodation at the following parks:

- Kruger National Park
- Mapungubwe National Park
- Addo Elephant National Park

And more . . .

Call your friendly RCI Holiday Guides for more information today!

Don't miss this opportunity of a lifetime to experience the BIG 5 (lion, rhino, leopard, cape buffalo and elephant) first hand.

Call (65) 6223 4333

or your country's toll-free number to book a memorable holiday.

*Terms and conditions apply
 – Subject to availability at the time of booking
 – First come, first serve basis

Making a rental request is simple

Shaam Ram tells you just how easy RCI's Rental Programme is

Having worked in the service industry for a few years, I find my current job to be exciting and enlightening as it allows me to learn about countries around the globe. In addition, it gives me great pleasure in being able to provide assistance and at the same time, send members on their well-deserved vacations.

I would like to tell you about our rental programme. Let me start off by explaining the difference between timeshare allotments and rentals. Timeshare allotments are available either for midweek (four nights, Monday to Friday), weekend (three nights, Friday to Monday) or seven nights full-week stays. As for rentals, units are available in different periods such as midweek, weekend and even daily for some properties of stay.

RCI's Rental Programme provides you the flexibility and convenience when making their travel arrangements. For example, members are able to extend their holidays for a day or two in a separate location. Not to mention the special rates that you have access to as a result of being with RCI. In addition, you can holiday in sought-after destinations worldwide without having to exchange their holiday week. This would mean that you are able to save their entitlement and use it at a separate time and location for yet another amazing holiday.



Making a rental request is simple and easy. All you have to do is inform one of RCI's friendly holiday guides of their expected date of travel and destination. Should there be availability, an immediate booking can be made.

Let me share my experience on how I recently assisted one of our members in using RCI's Rental Programme. Our member was travelling to Korea with her family. She booked the first week, exchanging her week into Mt Sorak and booked a weekend rental stay in Seoul City. Having booked her rental with RCI, she managed to save over S\$120, which delighted her!

To sum things up, RCI rentals are easy to use and extremely handy for members who want to enjoy the convenience of being in the heart of the city, save some dollars and want to utilise their exchange week at a different time or location.



DESTINATION
FEATURE

LIVE IT UP IN BANGKOK

There's no way one can visit Bangkok without shopping and eating on the itinerary. **Weihn Tan** tells you how to live it up in the City of Angels.

Bangkok is fast establishing itself as one of the trendiest and most desired shopping and dining havens in Asia over the past years, thanks to the Thai government's stamp on developing the local lifestyle scene there. The city is reminiscent of Kuala Lumpur a couple of years ago but more affordable, and way, way edgier. Local designers are in abundance, while shopping centres and restaurants are mushrooming at a rapid rate. Here's an itinerary on what not to miss in bustling Bangkok.

TRENDY DESIGNS

Bangkok is where it's at for big name boutiques, world class, funky local designers and affordable, no-frills knick knacks. With no less than 15 major shopping malls there, visitors are certainly spoilt for choice.

The biggest shopping centre in Bangkok, **Siam Centre**, recently had a facelift, and is still considered the place to visit. This magical, modern, vividly coloured glass box appeals to families, teenagers and trendsetters alike, as it carries local brand names such as Soda, Fly Now, Kloset and Senada. There are also a few trendy food outlets on each floor, making it one of the most convenient and accessible shopping centres here.

Also popular is **The Emporium Shopping Complex**, as it is well constructed and decorated in a "Parisian" style. Emporium stocks mid- to high-end designer brands, and provides shoppers with an elegant and purchase-inducing ambience, especially in the women's department. More sought after designer brands can also be found at **Gayson** and **Erawan Bangkok**. Both are located at Siam Central, and are mere minutes away from one another, and is connected via an overhead bridge.

Part of the Grand Hyatt Erawan, Erawan Bangkok stocks multi-brand boutiques like Blackjack and Club 21 (similar to that found in Singapore, but with different, more diverse, collections), as well as a whole floor dedicated to beauty, health and well-being. Gayson is also extremely popular among the rich and famous, who go there for top-end international and Thai brands — from Dior to Belle to Givenchy to Bangkok Fashion Society. The mood here is elegant and sophisticated.

SERIOUS ABOUT STYLE

But for the well-heeled who are serious about style, check out the one-of-a-kind **Playground!** at Sukhumvit Soi 55. Thai royal ties and celebrities have been spotted here on a weekly basis, and is the latest territory for the hip and trendy. Playground! is essentially a concept store for the Thai groovy set, and all the collections found here are specially handpicked by the proprietors. Consisting of three levels, shoppers are assured of an exclusive experience, as home décor items from Europe and the US, edgy local and

international fashion brands, rare music, magazines and toys are all located under one roof.

For those into fuss-free shopping, head down to the packed **MBK Centre** for everyday items. A lot of tourists swear by MBK as it is huge—spanning over 89,000sqm, and has over 2,000 retail stores and 150 dining outlets. MBK is also hot for that pseudo Louis Vuitton or Prada that you've been eyeing for the longest time, as it is the biggest market for fashion accessories, mobile phones and entertainment items in town.

If you love a good bargain, **Chatuchak Weekend Market** is the place to be on the weekends. Practically everything under the sun, from the smallest nails, to foods, trendy fashion, antiques, wooden carvings, masks from far-off lands, colourful fish of every hue and singing birds, can be found here.

More bargains can also be had at the **Suan Lum Night Market**. Decorative items, cheap clothing and accessories are a staple here, and is a good place to chill and unwind after a day's out. Suan Lum's ad hoc night arts performances are also free and entertaining.

EV Tip:

Make sure that you set aside 500 baht for airport tax when leaving Bangkok's Don Muang International Airport.



EAT WELL

Bangkok's wining and dining scene is also burgeoning, with literally thousands of food establishments to choose from,



Bargaining is vital at Chatuchak Weekend Market.

EV Tip:

Visit money changers when in town or shopping centres, as it is difficult to find money changers in the outskirts of Bangkok.



Suan Lum Night Market is a good place both to shop and hang out.

and Japanese and Italian cuisines are *de rigueur* right now. It is essential to be discerning when it comes to dining in Bangkok as almost all the restaurants here are top-notch.

Koi Restaurant at Sukhumvit Soi 20 is known as one of the city's trendiest dining spots. Named after the distinctly coloured Japanese carp, the restaurant which originated in Los Angeles about four years ago, is divided into a bar, sushi bar, four private rooms and a posh dining area. The décor here is chic and Zen-like. Some of the best contemporary Japanese dishes here include miso-bronzed black cod with fresh harlequin-cut vegetables and *sansho*-rubbed Wagyu rib eye steak with portobello sauce.

More stylish food can also be had at **Govinda**, at Sukhumvit Soi 22, where chef Giovanni Sotgia makes everything a good Italian restaurant should, such as the egg-free homemade pasta with porcini mushrooms and yogurt-flavoured panacotta; and **Basilico**, a popular pizza place amongst families and friends. The place boasts a wide selection of quality pizza, and has a warm, convivial atmosphere.

For tasty seafood with a Thai twist, **Je-Ngor** is a good bet. With six established branches serving fresh and tasty seafood, there is much to be had here, including the charcoal grilled Thai seabass in rock salt, and baked goose and egg noodle in casserole.

Those who prefer dining at a more romantic spot, head no further than **Sacz**, located on the first floor of the Majestic Grande Hotel. The food is Mediterranean Italian, while the décor is open and inviting. Its contemporary style stresses sleek dark wood furniture and playfully coloured cushions in yellow, purple and dark blue, which adds to an assured dining soiree.

For the best desserts in town, head for **Bar Italia**, located on the ground floor of shopping centre Gaysorn. A long stylish white bar showcasing food and desserts gives it a laidback but classy look. Consistent with the low-key atmosphere, desserts look simple in their presentation, and the flavours are splendid, especially the multi-flavoured gelatos on deck.

EV Tip:

Ask for tax refund forms if you are shopping at the major shopping centres, as tax on goods and services is 5 per cent of total purchases.

Travel Tips

Climate

- Expect temperatures to be in the mid- to high-30s and plenty of humidity. The best time to visit Bangkok is between November and February as during these months, it rains the least and it's not too hot.

Getting Around

- Take the BTS SkyTrain, Bangkok's mass transit system, especially during peak office hours, as the jams are unpredictable, and may take as long as two hours to clear. Get the 3-Day SkyTrain Tourist Pass – you'll save a lot in cab fares and can travel in comfort.



- Taxis are usually metered, but for *tuks tuks* or motorcycles, you will need to agree on the fare with the driver, depending on the distance travelled. Unlicensed taxis should be avoided.
- For travelling out of the city, you can easily arrange with the local tour companies for a chartered van or book a taxi for the whole day. To get to Pattaya or Kanchanaburi from Bangkok, it is best to hire a private car or van with a driver.

Social Norms

- Thais don't normally shake hands when they greet one another, but instead press their palms together in a gesture called *wai*. Generally, a younger person *wais* an elder, who returns it.
- Thais regard the head as the highest part of the body, literally and figuratively. Therefore, avoid touching them on the head and don't point your feet at them or at an object as it is considered rude.

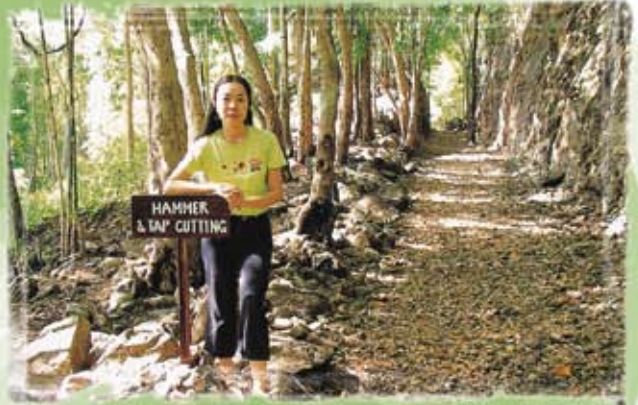
RCI Resorts in Bangkok

- Grand Tower Inn
- MTC Plus @ Grand Tower Inn
- Quality Suites Airport Bangkok
- QVI @ The Elegance Court
- Tai-Pan Hotel



Getting ready for a pony ride at Queen Victoria Market in Melbourne.

Tan Hui Yue, 4 years old



At Hellfire Pass, Thong Pha Phum District, Kanchanaburi, Thailand.

Niyada Anukul



A most memorable early white Christmas at Schloss Grubhof in Salzburg, Austria.

Chai Fong Yin



Enjoying the magnificent view of The Twelve Apostles along the Great Ocean Road in Melbourne with my family.

Tan Kok Beng

Your Photo Details

Complete and attach this form (photocopies accepted) together with your pictures and send them to us (see page 4 for address):

Name: _____

Home Country: _____

RCI Membership No.: _____ Date of Picture: _____

Brief Explanation of Picture: _____

All prints and slides are to be taken while on holiday with RCI.
All prints and slides will be considered the property of Endless Vacation and will not be returned.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Personal information collected on this form is consistent with the RCI Privacy Policy.



Outside Pura Besakih Temple in Bali, Indonesia.

Toh Swee Ling

RCI Rentals

AUSTRALIA

Experience vibrant Sydney and charming Melbourne. Discover pristine forests, explore the Great Barrier Reef, try your luck at the casino, have fun on the latest rides at the theme parks, enjoy the fabulous shopping and nightlife, or just relax on the beach.

Gold Coast

Per Room Night

Sunset Island Resort	From S\$83 (1 bedroom)
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Melbourne

Punt Hill South Yarra	From S\$148 (1 bedroom)
-----------------------	----------------------------

Punt Hill Manhattan	From S\$195 (1 bedroom)
---------------------	----------------------------

Punt Hill The Stanton	From S\$215 (2 bedroom)
-----------------------	----------------------------

Punt Hill Little Bourke	From S\$170 (studio)
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Sydney

The Oaks at Goldsbrough Apartment	From S\$175 (studio)
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The Oaks at Maestri Towers	From S\$175 (studio)
----------------------------	-------------------------

Perth

The Alderney On Hay	From S\$145 (2 bedroom)
---------------------	----------------------------

Quality Suites Kingstone on Hay	From S\$158 (2 bedroom)
---------------------------------	----------------------------

Choose your fun...



ENGLAND

Soak in the history, heritage and culture, explore the Thames, visit some of the 300 art galleries and museums, eat your way around the world at London's 6,000 restaurants, shop to your heart's content... and don't miss the amazing views from the London Eye.

London

Per Room Night

Bayswater Inn	From S\$179 (twin room) <i>(with Continental breakfast for 2)</i>
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INDONESIA

From centuries-old culture to gorgeous beaches, Indonesia has everything. Take in the music and dance, the temples and palaces. Explore jungles and picturesque hillsides – even a magnificent volcano. Play a round or two of golf, or just enjoy the warmth of its people.

Bali

Per Room Night

Club Risata Bali	From S\$63 (studio)
------------------	------------------------

Swiss Belhotel Bali Aga	From S\$79
-------------------------	------------

Above rates quoted are based on per room night. Some of these resorts are available for daily stays while others are available for midweek, weekend and/or full-week stays. Check with your RCI Guides for details.

- Subject to availability at the time of booking
- Rates subject to change without prior notice
- Terms and conditions apply

from urban hot-spots at incredible prices.



KOREA

Offering the best of both worlds – shopping and entertainment, and quiet communion with nature are the charming cities of Seoul and Sorak – with its craggy peaks, lush forests, tremendous waterfalls, ancient temples and the popular Soraksan National Park.

Seoul

Coop Residence

Per Room Night

From S\$79
(studio)



SINGAPORE

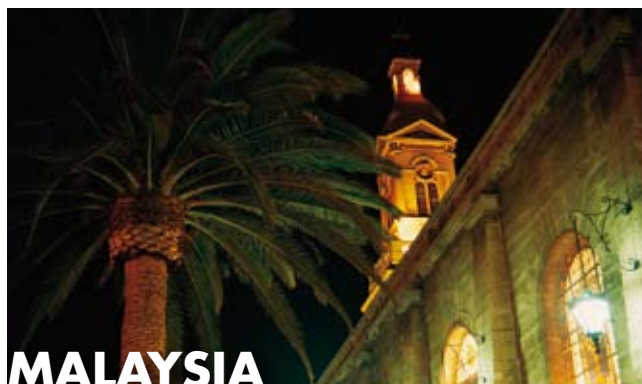
Enjoy the super malls on Orchard Road and the mouthwatering food at the hawker centres. Visit the Night Safari and Jurong Bird Park, and revel in the wonderful experiences at Sentosa.

City Bayview Hotel

City Bayview Hotel

Per Room Night

From S\$99



MALAYSIA

Rows of quaint shophouses exist cheek by jowl with the glistening skyscrapers in Kuala Lumpur. Amidst them are lovely gardens, home to a delightful variety of flora and fauna. KL is also a shopper's dream, with a tantalising variety of products and the lure of attractive prices.

Kuala Lumpur

Micasa All Suites

Per Room Night

From S\$116
(1 bedroom)
(with breakfast for 2)



THAILAND

Laze on powdery white sandy beaches, enjoy spectacular sunrises and sunsets, get a relaxing massage. Or, if you want action, there's plenty. Try some windsurfing, kayaking, diving and snorkelling.

Phuket

Patong Tower Condominium

Per Room Night

From S\$108

Call your RCI Guide on (65) 6223 4333 or your country's toll-free number to book your holiday.

RCI Directory of Resorts Update

New Affiliations at Press Time

7663

PVC @ CIRRUS SPA VILLAGE

Taiwan

Wu Lai Xiang, Xi Luo An Road 81,
Taipei
Taiwan

☎ 886/2 2661 6695 ✈ Taipei Airport: 80km

This resort is a short getaway for many locals as it is located on top of a hill, which is about 20 to 30 minutes away from Taipei. Enjoy the magnificent view around the resort and get away from the hustle and bustle of the crowded city. The area where the resort is located is known to be the backyard of Taipei city, where many locals will drive through in the evenings and on the weekends.

Check In/Out

Friday after 2pm/before 12noon

Unit Max/Priv

HU (2/2)
ST (4/2)

Unit Amenities

Air Conditioning-A
Telephone-A

On-Site Amenities

Conference facilities, restaurant, spa

Other Amenities

Medical Facilities-30km



15/01 – 05/02
08/04 – 22/04
04/11 – 18/11

25/03 – 08/04
23/09 – 04/11
18/11 – 15/01

05/02 – 25/03
22/04 – 23/09

7901

HANWHA RESORT HAEUNDAE

South Korea

1410-3 Ui-Dong, Haeundae-Gu,
Busan Metropolitan City 612-824
South Korea

☎ 82/51 749 5500 ✈ Hanwha (Haeundae) – Gimhae Airport: 99km

Busan is a second largest city in South Korea. As a major port city, there is a myriad of sea routes offering gateways to Japan and the rest of the world. Busan also boasts scenic views of nature, with Nakdonggang River flowing in the west adjacent to the ocean at the south. Its landscape includes a coastline with fine beaches, scenic islets and tall mountains. The Pusan International Film Festival (PIFF) is held annually and attracts movie buffs from all over the world. The nation's top marine resort offers a variety of seaside recreation.

Check In/Out

Friday after 3pm/before 12noon

Unit Max/Priv

1 BR (3/2)
2 BR (4/4)

Unit Amenities

Air Conditioning-A
Kitchen-A/P
Microwave-A
Telephone-A

On-Site Amenities

Conference facilities, games room,
grocery store, lift, restaurant, sauna,
snack bar

Other Amenities

Auto rental-NB, beach-NB, boating-
NB, children's pool-NB, fishing-NB,
medical facilities-5 km, shopping
area-NB, swimming pool-NB, wind
surfing-NB



08/07 – 30/09
25/11 – 31/12

01/01 – 04/03

04/03 – 08/07
30/09 – 25/11

7902

HANWHA RESORT JEJU

South Korea

(690-100) 3-16, Hoicheon-Dong,
Jeju City 690-100
South Korea

☎ 82/64 725 9000 ✈ Jeju Airport: 19km

Jeju-do is the premier tourist destination in South Korea because of its stunning natural scenery and superior tourist amenities. Scenic beaches, waterfalls, cliffs and caves exist in harmony, and the mild weather makes Jeju-do an ideal tourist destination. Mt Hallasan in Jeju-do has flora and fauna of both temperate and tropical varieties, co-existing on the mountain. The Jungmun Tourist Complex is a comprehensive tourist resort and provides top-quality accommodation and tourist facilities.

Check In/Out

Friday after 3pm/before 12noon

Unit Max/Priv

2 BR (4/4)

Unit Amenities

Air Conditioning-A
Kitchen-A/P
Microwave-A
Telephone-A

On-Site Amenities

Conference facilities, golf, grocery store, horseback riding, lift, live

entertainment, restaurant, sauna, shopping area, snack bar

Other Amenities

Auto rental-NB, beach-19km, boating-19km, fishing-19km, hairdresser-NB, laundry-NB, medical facilities-NB, water skiing-19km, wind surfing-19km



26/02 – 25/03
20/04 – 26/08
07/10 – 11/11
23/12 – 31/12

01/01 – 26/02
25/03 – 22/04
26/08 – 09/09
02/12 – 23/12

22/04 – 20/05
09/09 – 07/10
11/11 – 02/12

7903

HANWHA RESORT SEORAK

South Korea

San 24-1 Changsa-Dong, Sokcho City,
Kangwon-Province, Kangwon-Do 217-130
South Korea

☎ 82/33 635 7711 ✈ Incheon International Airport: 249km

Hanwha Resort Seorak is located in Sokcho City. Sokcho is a coastal city in the northeastern part of Gangwon-do. Its major industries are aquatic products and tourism. Flanked by the East Sea and Mt. Seoraksan, Sokcho is an extremely popular tourist destination. Autumnal-tinted leaves that blanket Mt. Seoraksan in the fall attract a myriad of visitors and the beaches along the East Sea are popular with tourists in the summer. It is the finest family resort in South Korea and has an 18-hole golf course with beautiful scenic landscape, a water park and spa Waterpia, and the Seorak Plaza Land Amusement Park at the heart of Mt. Seorak.

Check In/Out

Friday after 3pm/before 12noon

Unit Max/Priv

2 BR (4/2)
3 BR (6/6)

Unit Amenities

Air Conditioning-A
Kitchen-A/P
Microwave-A
Telephone-A

On-Site Amenities

Children's pool, conference facilities, exercise equipment, games room, golf, grocery store, lift, live entertainment, medical facilities, playground area, restaurant, sauna, shopping area, snack bar, spa, swimming pool, whirlpool/hot tub

Other Amenities

Auto rental-NB, beach-3km, boating-NB, downhill skiing-19km, fishing-NB, hairdresser-NB, lake-NB, laundry-NB, ski school-19km, water skiing-3km



24/06 – 02/09
25/11 – 12/02

08/04 – 24/06
02/09 – 21/10

12/02 – 08/04
21/10 – 25/11

LEGEND

Unit Type: HU: Hotel unit, ST: Studio, 1BR: One-bedroom unit, 2BR: Two-bedroom unit, 3BR: Three-bedroom unit.

Unit Max: Maximum occupancy. **Unit Priv:** Private occupancy. **Unit Amenities:** A: In all units, S: In some units, Kitchen: F: Full kitchen, M: Mini kitchen, P: Partial kitchen. **Other Amenities:** NB: Nearby

RVC @ Hotel Rama Candidasa

The resort's newly renovated Garpu Restaurant offers breathtaking views of the sea

Hotel Rama Candidasa, located in east Bali, offers tourists the ultimate peace and tranquility. The resort is a perfect place for relaxation by the beach while enjoying the natural sounds of the sea and its breeze.

The resort's Garpu ("fork") Restaurant, which was renovated in November last year, has a Zen theme and boasts wooden features, minimalist lounge chairs and furniture in an open space. As the restaurant is located on the edge of the sea, diners can enjoy splendid views of the ocean and soak in the cool sea breezes.

The restaurant can assist in any special celebration, from a romantic dinner to a family gathering, with its wide selection of Mediterranean, Italian and Balinese specialties.

Hotel Rama Candidasa also offers cooking classes, Balinese dance lessons, handicraft lessons using coconut leaves, water sport activities and other recreational activities.

Rama Candidasa is a member of Rama Hotels & Resorts Bali which is also known as Ramayana & Co, a Bali homegrown



company which also owns and operates Ramayana Resort & Spa, Rama Beach Resort & Villas, Kuta Seaview Cottage and Rama Garden Hotel, all located in Bali. Rama Hotels & Resorts Bali is currently undergoing an intensive re-branding, upgrading and renovation exercise on its properties to achieve the four-star standard.

PVC @ Cirrus Spa Village

Experience peace and tranquility at Cirrus Spa Village

Want to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city? PVC@ Cirrus Spa Village might be the perfect getaway. The resort is located at the top of a hill a short distance away from Taipei.

Upon reaching the resort, you will be awed by the magnificent view of Taiya Aboriginal Valley and Wulai.

The location of the resort is known to be the backyard of Taipei city, where many locals spend their weekends. Being located in a natural protection area, you will be able to feel the presence of the early settlers, the aboriginals.

Cirrus Spa Villages is an ideal resort for leisure travellers and family holidays.



Hanwha Resorts

RCI is proud to announce its recent affiliation with three resort properties that have been developed by Hanwha Land Development Co., Ltd.

Established in 1979, Hanwha Land Development is Korea's leading pioneer in the condominium business. Hanwha Resorts is the leading brand at the forefront of Korea's leisure industry. Hanwha Resorts have 12 directly managed condominiums in the most beautiful sites in Korea.

At present, the three RCI-affiliated properties include Hanwha Resorts Seorak, Hanwha Resorts Jeju and Hanwha Resorts Haeundae. RCI is actively seeking to further affiliate more Hanwha Resorts, and at the same time acquire more rental properties in Korea.

Hanwha Resorts Seorak

Year-round resort complete with mountain, sea, spa and golf course

The finest comprehensive family resort in Korea. The Seorak Plaza Country Club consists of a 1,564 room condominium with an 18-hole golf course that encompasses beautiful scenic landscape, water park and spa Waterpia, and the Seorak Plaza Land amusement park, at the heart of Mt. Seorak.

Hanwha Resort Jeju

First ever comprehensive resort in Jeju, the island of fantasy

The first large-scale resort in Jeju, complete with a 396-room condominium, Bonggae Plaza Country Club and a nine-hole public golf course, and the Therapy Centre.

Hanwha Resort Haeundae

Colourful seaside resort offering marine life experience and water activities

The nation's number one marine resort, the 417-room Haeundae Resort, offers a variety of seaside recreational activities such as windsurfing, yachting and water skiing, and various facilities.



SMALL ISLAND, LARGE PARADISE

Tioman Island is an idyllic spot for leisurely days under the sun. C. S. Wee swam in its emerald waters, enjoyed a stroll by the beach and was lulled to sleep by the sound of the waves.



Set like a glittering green jewel in the South China Sea, Tioman Island beckons the visitor with its white beaches and crystal clear cobalt blue seas. It is the largest of a group of 46 extinct volcanic islands some 30km from the coast of Johor and Pahang states of West Malaysia.

Any island as enchanting as Tioman must have its mysterious past shrouded in legend. Tioman's goes like this: Eons ago, a magical dragon princess, flying from China to Singapore, made a pit stop on Tioman. It turns out that her stop was for more than rest and water as she gave up the idea of visiting and marrying her Singapore prince, to settle down in Tioman, enraptured by its tropical beauty and charms. Others go so far as to say that the princess vowed to spend her days giving pleasure and comfort to weary travellers on the island.

Is it mere coincidence that the 39km by 12km island is pear or dragon shaped? On the west coast of the island are twin mountains which look like overturned ice cream cones or "dragon horns", also locally named "Nenek Semekut". On misty mornings, the cloud shrouded 700-foot high peaks are said to

resemble dragon backs swathed with smoke, breathed from a dragon's nostrils. The setting is perfect for another dinosaur movie.

In the early 1900s, the island was most likely used as a monsoon shelter for passing merchant ships, pirates and fishermen who later established villages on its western shores. The large horns were also prominent navigational markers for any seafarer past or present.

EV Tips: Watch out for sharp coral, sharp spiny sea urchins and stinging jellyfish. Resist touching or stroking any sea life as some are dangerous and the nearest hospital is on the mainland. Topless sunbathing is strongly discouraged.

TREKKING

- Fairly strenuous 7km hike from west to east, partly on a concrete footpath through humid tropical jungle. Cool off in pristine waterfalls before reaching Juara Village and beach on the east coast. This is a two- to three-hour undulating trek each way that requires the better part of any day. Beware that the path is unlit and the jungle gets dark early, more so on cloudy days. Bring water, some food and insect repellent. For a worry free trek, hire a guide. It is also possible to walk from Air Batang to Salang on a relatively flat path beside a power line.

WATER ACTIVITIES

- Snorkeling or scuba diving at the reefs just off Salang beach and Tulai and Renggis Islands. Most resorts can arrange for boat trips which take up most of the day with lunch usually provided, and you should get to swim at two to three spots and enjoy good coral and underwater life. Beware of small jellyfish which can pack a nasty sting. Try not to lose any rental gear as you could be subject to expensive or arbitrary replacement costs. Sadly, and in the name of progress, most coral off the main village of Tekek are gone.

- Some places rent out sailing boats and canoes. Take note of strong winds and stay close to shore if you're not sure of your skills. Rent a jet ski if you fancy something noisier or faster.

- Fishing enthusiasts won't be disappointed but it is only permitted outside the Tioman Marine Park or at least 3km from the coast. Like scuba diving, fishing enthusiasts are known to spend days and nights indulging in their favourite pastime. Most are rewarded with a bounty for many a beach barbecue.

Travel Tips

Getting There: Tioman is accessible by boat from Tanjung Gemok in Pahang and Mersing in Johor. Travel time is approximately 1.5 hours. It can also be reached by a four-hour ferry ride from the Tanah Merah Ferry Terminal in Singapore. Ferry schedules are subject to tidal changes and the year-end monsoon.

Mersing is easily accessible from points in Malaysia and Singapore. Enclosed and guarded parking is available in Mersing.

By Air: Berjaya Air operates daily direct flights to Tioman from Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.

Around The Island: Few main roads and non-existent traffic make cycling a breeze. Rent a bicycle or take a walk and enjoy the village atmosphere.

For offshore excursions, hire a local boat to get to the surrounding islands and reefs. Regular boat (known as sea buses) services ply some beachside villages.

Best Time To Visit: Visit between March and October before the onset of the northeast monsoon. During the monsoon season, some establishments are closed. Public and school holidays also see larger crowds and a drop in service standards.

Essential Items: Pack a flashlight and batteries, sunscreen and insect repellent. It can be hot so stay hydrated and always carry drinking water. As cloudy days do not deter UV rays, do slap on the sunscreen.

Perhaps, the island's greatest claim to fame was its locale for the 1950s Hollywood musical of an Indonesian island, Bali Hai, entitled *South Pacific*. In the 1970s, Tioman also made it to *TIME* magazine's list of Ten Most Beautiful Islands in the World, and the world made a beeline for Tioman.

Today's visitors are more likely to be seduced by sun, sea, sand and swaying palm trees in Tioman. The warm waters and good visibility make Tioman a paradise for divers and snorkelers. For others, there are good treks, idyllic beaches and stunning sunsets after a torrential rain.

Tioman's main beaches from north to south are Salang, Monkey Bay, Penuba, Tekek, Genting and Nipah – all on the west coast.

Tekek is the largest village. Here you'll find the local police station, school, post office, bank, government offices, sundry shops and some nightlife as well as

the more well off villagers. The island's landing strip (airport), marina and jetty are nearby. There's even an 18-hole golf course at Berjaya Tioman Beach Golf & Spa Resort – RCI Resort. The island's only road, all 3km of it, links Tekek with Lalang Village.

Genting Village on the southwest coast was mainly a fishing community. These days, some tourist accommodations are set on a rocky hillside, offering panoramic sunset views.

Salang, on the northwest, has the island's best beach and a favourite diving spot. It is a well laid out and well-stocked place with mini mart, three scuba shops, jet ski hire, canoes and restaurants.





Charming Kuantan

Not a big city by any standards, Kuantan's charms lie in its street life, town centre attractions and nearby beaches. **C. S. Wee** checks things out.

Kuantan is a major urban centre on West Malaysia's east coast. As the state capital of Pahang, it is also a commercial and administrative centre. Most visitors head for the beaches facing the South China Sea. Naturally, the further you get out of any big town, the quieter and cleaner your spot of sand will be.

The top choice for Kuantan locals is nearby **Teluk Chempedak Beach**. Sailing, surfing, skiing and sunbathing is just 5km away from town. A slow drive along Jalan Telok Sisek reveals shady roads lined with the town's grandest and most expensive houses. Close accessibility also means that there is a string of

hawker stalls and crowds on holidays.

The scenery is quite nice for a beach out on a headland, yet just minutes away from town. Chempedak Beach is not fringed by palm trees, but there are shady secondary forest reaching parts of the beach. Further north on this stretch, it gets more natural. An elevated boardwalk meanders over large boulders through the **Teluk Chempedak Forest Reserve** and on to a more secluded Pelindung Beach. And if you're up for more hiking, there's a nearby waterfall and a mini zoo.

Just 10km north is **Berserah Beach**, a stretched out *kampung* (village) where huge lumbering buffaloes are used to haul carts



full of fish from the sea. The shallow shore actually prevents many of the fishing boats from getting closer, so the haul is usually transferred in rattan baskets from fishing boat to buffalo cart and onto processing plants in the village. It is not unusual to see these big-horned mammals half submerged in crashing waves, what more hauling a very heavy load onto shore. Berserah is a

fishing village best known for its salted anchovies and dried fish. A batik factory and some handicraft shops line the main road.

Forty-five kilometres north of Kuantan lies **Cherating**, a formerly sleepy beach hangout for travellers on the Southeast Asian backpackers' trail. Cherating's draw has always been its sheltered, flat bay and wide casuarina-lined beaches that seem to extend up and down the coast forever. The inexpensive guesthouses, beach



restaurants and quaint wooden beach huts set among coconut groves that gave Cherating its claim to fame have been around since the 1970s. Some have gone through many makeovers and their presence adds a touch of bohemia to the village. Later developments are mostly upmarket with more luxury accommodation suited to well-heeled crowds. A handicraft village promotes classes in batik painting. There are even a few beach bars and pubs to chill out and relax.

Located off the main coast highway, most of the guesthouses, shops and restaurants are linked by a small lane parallel to the beach. And thankfully, most visitors like it that way. Apart from doing nothing while soaking in the sun, the more active can be seen out on the water swimming, windsurfing or parasailing. Low tide is extremely low, allowing for a stroll of at least 200m in the soft white sand to reach the sea and even further to get deep enough for a swim.

Ten kilometres further north is **Chendor Beach**, best known for its turtles. From July to September, green turtles and sometimes a giant leatherback come ashore to lay eggs. Although the nesting turtles and eggs are dwindling in numbers, in some years none are spotted, the beach's isolation is its main draw.

Any trip into coastal Pahang requires a quick tour of **Kuantan**, even if the beach is your main goal. The townsfolk are quite friendly and laid back for an urban centre. It must be the slow pace of life and calming sea breezes. The town is compact and easily navigable on foot. The main road, conveniently named Jalan Besar ("big road"), is lined with old colonial era shophouses, coffeeshops and well-stocked sundry stores for 400,000 folks. An imposing structure by the soccer field is the very blue, green and egg white Masjid Negeri or State Mosque along Jalan Makhota. Its four towering minarets are brightly lit at night and is quite a mesmerising sight.

Keropok (fried fish crackers) are popular buys for most visitors. Just as popular are sun-dried salted fish which have a pungent aroma and are an acquired taste. Do check out the shops by the Pahang River. Near the old bus terminus are a host of souvenir stalls with rattan handicraft and possibly the best Ramli hamburger stand in the country as well as a local hawker centre by the riverside. For those who need air-conditioning, there are two mid-sized malls replete with western fast food outlets and cinemas on Jalan Tun Ismail, close by the express bus station and the newer part of town. Just follow the crawling traffic and you'll get there!

EV Tip:

For a taste and smell of Pahang's famous delicacy, salted fish and fish crackers (*keropok*), take a stroll down Jalan Besar, Kuantan's main street.

Travel Tips

Best Time to Visit Year round or any month, except the year-end during the northeast monsoon season, typically from November to January. These months see moderate to heavy rain with the occasional flooding while beach activities grind to a halt and sea swimming can be dangerous.

Getting There Singapore is a three- to four-hour drive away via Johor Bharu, Kota Tinggi, Mersing and Pekan. From Johor Bahru, follow signs to Kota Tinggi and head north. From Kuala Lumpur, head east on the Karak Highway which leads to the new East Coast Highway. The town airport lies 1.5km inland.



Sun, Sea, Sand & Sumptuous Food...

Kuantan Has It All

Want to get away from the hustle and bustle of city life from as little as **S\$12.80*** per person per day? Visit **Kuantan**, the state capital of Pahang, which is fast gaining popularity as a beach resort.

A great location with many interesting attractions and beautiful sandy beaches, Kuantan also has plenty of eateries offering delicious Malaysian fare and fresh seafood.

* Per person per night rate is calculated based on occupancy of 2 persons on a week's stay.

- Subject to availability at the time of booking
- First come, first served basis
- Terms and conditions apply
- Book by 15 March 2006
- Valid for travel by 22 May 2006
- Promotion excludes public and school holidays

This is your chance to enjoy good Malaysian food, the Malaysian way! What more could you ask for?

Call (65) 6223 4333

or your country's toll-free number to book a relaxing holiday in Kuantan now!



RCI's representative team soaking up a proud moment!

RCI's Singapore Call Centre wins awards for being among the "BEST" in region



Jyoti receiving her certificate of achievement



Dawn in high spirits while receiving her award

RCI's Singapore call centre took home several big awards during one exciting evening in November last year. The Asia office won the coveted Silver Award for "Call Centre of the Year" (within Singapore) at the Fifth Annual Singapore Call Centre Awards, and the Bronze Award for "Regional Call Centre of the Year" (covering Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Hong Kong) at the Second Regional Call Centre Awards.

In addition, three of RCI Singapore's employees earned individual recognition, bringing further accolades to the Asia team.

The prestigious event, which was presided over by the Minister of State, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Tourism, Trade & Industry, is held every year to recognize the best call centres and individual call centre employees who have demonstrated exemplary performance in the last year.

RCI Singapore won recognition in all the categories it had entered including:

"Call Centre Representative of the Year" (Under 50 seats)

Criteria: Open to all call centre agents and telemarketers who were in their current role for at least six months.

Kudos to: Lim Kuo Ching, who received a certificate of achievement as a Finalist.

"Call Centre Champion of the Year" (Under 50 seats)

Criteria: Open to all call centre staff who work in a support or administrative role.

Kudos to: Dawn Ng, who won the Bronze for finishing in third place overall.

"Team Leader of the Year" (Under 50 seats)

Criteria: Open to anyone who has call centre agents reporting directly to them.

Kudos to: Jyoti Indru, who was presented with a certificate of achievement as a Finalist.

The winners for the region were chosen by an international panel of call centre experts. Award templates and supporting documentation were collected, and interviews and spontaneous employee opinion surveys were conducted before the panel reached their decision.

"This year was the first year that RCI entered the corporate awards and we were all delighted when we won the Silver Award for coming second overall in Singapore," said Esther Friend, director of operations, RCI Asia.

"Our excitement knew no bounds when we were named finalists in the regional category as well. To go and win the third prize there was the ultimate icing on the cake! I would like to acknowledge the achievement of each and every person who got nominated for these awards but most of all I would like to congratulate the entire RCI office for helping us do so well this year. It was one big team effort."



Romantic Austrian Holiday

RCI Member Patrick Low had a romantic time with his wife in Austria

On a 12-hour flight last October from Singapore to Vienna, thoughts of *The Sound of Music*, Mozart's birthplace, mediaeval castles, the Alps and mountain lakes kept playing in my mind.

I had made an exchange with RCI for Austria and the resort selected was Mondri Holiday at Grundlsee.

We made our way from Salzburg Airport to the resort using a rented car which has a diesel engine as petrol is expensive in Europe. In Austria, diesel costs €1.02 per litre.

Using the directions given by RCI on our confirmation exchange slip, which we found to be very accurate, we found our way easily after two hours of driving from Salzburg. The scenery on the way to the resort was breathtaking. As it was the end of autumn, there was a kaleidoscope of colours in the vegetation.

Driving through the Salzkammergut Lake regions, we passed many beautiful mountain lakes like Mondsee and St. Wolfgangsee, which offered postcard perfect scenery.

The resort staff was very helpful, friendly and efficient. The resort is situated on a hill facing the beautiful Grundlsee Lake which is surrounded by mountains.

The next day, with some helpful tips from the resort staff, we drove to Grossglockner High Alpine Road which is regarded as one of the world's most beautiful mountain routes. It was



Top: Breathtaking mountain scenery from Mondri Holiday's grounds
Left: At Pasterze Glacier off Grossglockner Alpine Road

about a three-hour drive up winding roads but it was well worth the effort. The road winds its way above steep ravines, offering views of snow-capped mountains on both sides.

As it was a Sunday, there were many cars queuing to pay at the tollgate to enter the road. The toll per car is €20.

We drove up to an elevation of 8,218 ft, the highest point along the route. From there, we branched off to Glacier Road and stopped at a viewing terrace at 7,772 ft which gave us a fabulous view of Grossglockner (Austria's highest peak at 12,457 ft) and Pasterze Glacier.

Our holiday would not be complete without visiting some mediaeval castles so the following day, we drove to a castle – Burg Hohenwerfen – about three hours away from the resort. We drove to the town of Werfen along Highway A10. This impressive castle, which is on a hill, can be seen from Werfen. It was built by the Archbishop of Salzburg in 1077.

We paid about €8 for English recordings as the Austrian castle guide walked us through the different areas of the castle – torture chamber, state room, armoury and belfry. After the tour, we were treated to a falconry show in the castle courtyard.

We decided to visit another castle – the picturesque Neuschwanstein in Bavaria – as Salzburg is very close to the border of Germany. We took a two-hour train ride to Munich and from Munich, we took another two-hour train ride to Fussen. From Fussen station, we took a bus which dropped us right in front of Neuschwanstein's ticketing office.

Neuschwanstein is an amazing castle and our visit there made our imagination run wild. No wonder the fairytale castle of Disneyland was modelled after it.

As we rented a car, we could visit more places like Salzburg, a historic old town and birthplace of Mozart, and the many lakeside towns in the Salzkammergut region where some places were used to film *The Sound of Music*.

Thanks to RCI, my wife and I had a memorable holiday that we exchanged into. The resorts are superb. We hope to enjoy many more exchange holidays with RCI.



Neuschwanstein Castle in the background

RCI congratulates Patrick Low on winning S\$100 for his holiday story.

Tell us about your holiday experiences and you could be the winner next time!

Write to *Endless Vacation Magazine*, RCI Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd, #09-01/05 PWC Building, 8 Cross Street, Singapore 048424. Or you can email us at asiamembers@rciap.com. Make sure you include your RCI Membership Number and a selection of pictures, together with the details of the names of people in the photographs and where they were taken. Closing date: 31 May 2006

RCI Asia Operational Resorts

CHINA

7525	Beijing Shihao International Hotel
7589	BLG Beijing Longlou Apartment
6785	Weihai Dawu Sea Feeling Hotel
6034	Dianchi Garden Hotel & Spa
7790	FEC@Bao Yue Lou
6629	Haixing Yunlong Bay Resort
6406	Holiday Inn Tianan Wuhan
6838	Huizhou Tangquan Golf Club
6834	International Countryside Club of Chongqing
3954	Jiuhua Spa and Resort
6967	Nirvana Resort Hainan
7481	Noble Yacht Club Hainan
4326	Paradise Hill Hotel Zhuhai
6408	Phoenix Resort
4980	Surf Plaza Qingdao
6888	The Silk Road Dunhuang Hotel
6965	TRAC@Hainan Noble Yacht Club
6137	TRAC@Jade Dragon Garden Hotel Lijiang
6622	TRAC@King Wing Hot Spring Hotel
5212	TRAC@Teda International Hotel & Club
6138	TLC Yunnan Good Chance Hotel



SINGAPORE

5381	Karimun Admiralty Country Club
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HONG KONG

7649	EC@Grand Blossom House
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INDONESIA

7590	Bali Emerald Villas
5459	Bali Masari Resort
6961	Bali Shangrila Beach Club
3505	Bali Tropic Resort & Spa
6363	Blue Point Bay Villas & Spa
5372	Club Bali@Java Highlands Resort
3690	Club Bali@Jayakarta Bali Residence
5368	Club Oasis@Jimbaran Hills
5933	Club Paradise@Jimbaran Hills
6916	Gili Meno Bird Park Resort
4170	Harris Resort
5458	Jimbaran Hills Resort
7724	Keraton Jimbaran Resort
3692	Mambruk Quality Resort
6302	Medewi Bay Retreat
3851	Nirwana Bali
3691	Risata Bali Resort & Spa
3968	Royal Bali Beach Club@Candidasa
5254	Royal Bali Beach Club@Jimbaran Bay
6920	RVC@Hotel Rama Candidasa
6959	RVC@Rama Garden Hotel
6818	RVC@Ramayana Resort & Spa
6660	Seminyak Suites
5450	Swiss-BellHotel Bali Aga

KOREA

3889	Daemyung Resort Sorak
3892	Daemyung Resort Yangpyung
7901	Hanwha Resort Haeundae
7902	Hanwha Resort Jeju
7903	Hanwha Resort Seorak
3049	Highla Donghae Beach Condominium
3697	Highla Donsan Spa Condominium
3048	Highla Kyongju Condominium
3190	Highla Sorak Valley Condominium
4156	Ilseung Muju Condominium
4329	Ilseung Namhangang Condominium
4155	Ilseung Sorak Condominium
5550	Jeju Tovice Beach Condominium
3694	Muju Resort
5551	Togo Hotspring Tovice Condominium
3891	Vivaldi Park

TAIWAN

4325	Kentington Resort
7663	PVC @ Cirrus Spa Village
6277	PPVC@Hoya Hot Springs Resort & Spa
2345	Victors Hualien Li-Yu Tan Resort
4337	Wing On Golf Country Club

THAILAND

5719	Chateau Dale Beach Resort
6305	Grand Tower Inn
2861	Hotel Royal Crown
2234	Jomtien Beach Paradise
4926	MTC@Lanna Resort
5456	MTC@The Legacy River Kwai
6373	MTC Plus@Grand Tower Inn
4344	Patong Resort Hotel
4341	Patong Tower Condominium
5556	Pattaya Hill Resort
3974	Quality Suites Airport Bangkok
5731	QVC@Samui Peninsula*
6432	QVC@The Andaman Beach Suites
6999	QVI@The Elegance Court
5376	Royal Bella Vista Country Club
4923	Royal Lighthouse Villas@Boat Lagoon
1300	Sigma Resort Club (South Pattaya)
5216	Tai-Pan Hotel
4973	The Allamanda Phuket
5377	The Resonance Club@State Tower



PHILIPPINES

7773	Astoria Plaza Suite
6781	Casa Del Mar Golf & Dive Resort
3502	Laguna de Boracay Resort
2184	Maribago Bluewater Beach Resort
5367	Nipa Beach Resort
1947	Panoly Town & Beach Club
6030	Pearl of the Pacific Beach Resort*
5369	Sunrise Holiday Mansion
5722	VCI Holidays@Batangas
5721	VCI Holidays@Mactan - Cebu
6837	VCI Holidays@Makati City
5720	VCI Holidays@Tagaytay

MALAYSIA

2860	Aseania Resort Langkawi
4919	Awana Genting HL Golf & Country Resort
4920	Awana Kijal Golf & Beach Resort
3967	Bayu Beach Resort
2864	Berjaya Tioman Beach Golf & Spa Resort
4166	Berjaya Tioman Suites
3013	Country Heights WRC
4167	Duta Palms Resort & Anglers' Club
4872	Duta Sands
3012	Duta Village Beach Resort
3010	Duta Vista Executive Suites
1703	Genting View Resort
3196	Greenhill Resort
5257	Heritage Hotel Cameron Highlands
5259	Heritage Hotel Ipoh
2869	KL Plaza Suites
3957	Leisure Cove
7771	Resort Suites at Sunway Lagoon Resort
6616	Swiss-Court Holiday Apartment
6613	Swiss-Garden Hotel Kuala Lumpur
6615	Swiss-Garden Resort & Spa Damai Laut
6614	Swiss-Garden Resort & Spa Kuantan

LEGEND

- ◆ Gold Crown Award
- Silver Crown Award
- Hospitality Award
- * Partially Available

Please note that the resort status is periodically reviewed and is subject to change. The resort status indicated here is current as of January 2006.



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