

"Webbed feet in Turtle Island" written by Michel GÉRARD

Koh Tao called the Turtle Island because of its shape is one of the best places in South-east Asia for all those who want to learn or practise diving.



Located 500 km from Bangkok, this small island of 21 km² with its beaches of white sand, palms and impressive granite cliffs, was originally a detention centre for the country's political offenders. Forty years ago, it was closed because the government of that time had realized that the place was a lot too pleasant to send prisoners...

All visitors arrive at the port of Mae Had that is the unique village of the island. There, it's possible to have a meal or refreshment in one of the numerous restaurants, to post mail or do some shopping. In the surroundings, are mountains covered by tropical forests, and in the sea, more than 28 diving sites are very inviting. The best periods of the year are February-May, and July-October since they offer superb conditions with a visibility that is often as much as 30 metres, in water with a minimum temperature of 28° Celsius. It also provides the best chance to see the shark-whales and other species that hide in the external reefs.

Staying in Robby's comfortable bungalows, situated in a very beautiful bay in Ao Chalok Ban Kao in the south of the island, an apprenticed diver can begin to enjoy diving with the numerous courses that are available for all levels.

For beginners or those who have a short time, a one-day initiation is proposed. It consists of a basic theoretical course and training in shallow water, before getting involved in the discovery of the sea floor accompanied by a professional diver titular of a license. For those wishing to validate their experience by a PADI certificate of scuba divers, two days are sufficient to allow you to dive up to twelve metres under direct surveillance of a qualified PADI instructor. For the most ambitious, four days will be necessary to earn the Open Water Diver's PADI license, that will qualify you to discover the aquatic fauna down at eighteen metres, independently with a partner everywhere in the world. For those interested in the Dive Master's license which is the professional one, there is no problem. Others can avail of this privilege too as there is one for different skill levels.

The different diving sites satisfy all tastes. Laem Thian is known for its pebbles and small caves, White Rock is very appreciated for night diving, Lighthouse has amazing colourful fish, Japanese Garden has a garden of corals. At Southwest Pinnacle, distinct species of inoffensive sharks can be approached, Twin Peaks has two groups of rocks, with one going down to 16 metres and the other 10 metres. There are many more sites that well deserve to be mentioned, and where all sorts of tropical fish can be seen like rays, turtles, bat fish or angelfish, unicorn fish or giant porcupine fish, etc...

For others who don't feel like diving, other activities are possible like the tour of the island in a dugout with a stop at Ko Nang Yuan, an island with 3 beach arms shaped like a star and the sea on all sides, or on foot in the jungle for the most courageous. The very beautiful idyllic beaches, abandoned by the webbed feet that are all in 10 metres deep water, are also an invitation to sunbathing and relaxation on their white sand. Snorkelling with a mask, a snorkel and palms, will amaze you with a fauna of colourful fish swimming around you, and walls of multicoloured corals.

In the evening, you can enjoy a tropical cocktail, well deserved, on one of the beaches, while watching a spectacular sunset, from the jail that became the jewel in the Gulf of Thailand

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