

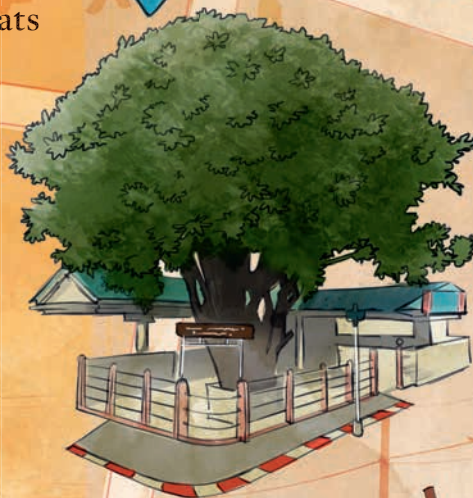


FLAVOURS

WALKING UP AN APPETITE

How a quick stroll around Phuket's Old Town offers a tasty blend of the island's best eats

Far away from the excesses of the west coast, Old Phuket Town is without a doubt the island's culinary centre. Founded by Chinese immigrants more than a century ago, this historic district was once the province's commercial capital – a bustling entrepot that attracted traders from China, India and Arabia. Eventually, descendants of these visiting merchants put down roots on the island, giving rise to a rich array of cuisines. Today, you'll find a slew of eateries serving everything from traditional Malay-influenced curries and Hokkien Chinese noodles to contemporary durian-accented ice cream, all set in heritage shophouses – a legacy of the Old Town's former glory.



Lock Tien Food Court

Hugely popular with visitors, Lock Tien serves up the best of local food in a shaded open-air courtyard. Snag an empty table and order a bowl of Hokkien-style fried noodles garnished with a fried egg, a plate of *popiah* (fresh spring rolls served with a sweet-spicy sauce), and several skewers of pork satay. You'll see what the fuss is all about.

Corner of Yaowarat Rd and Dibuk Rd



Kopitiam by Wilai

At the heart of the Old Town's multicultural mix is the Peranakan (known locally as Baba-Nyonya) community – descendants of the Chinese workers who arrived in the early 20th century to find work, and ended up staying on and marrying Thais. While they have now been integrated into the local community, you can still sample nostalgic Nyonya fare at the vintage-style Kopitiam by Wilai. Try the *bak kut teh* (pork ribs in a peppery broth) and slow-cooked massaman curry (a rich but mild coconut curry).

**18 Thalang Rd;
fb.com/kopitiambywilai**

Bookhemian

Cafés don't come any cooler than this. Bookhemian's interiors are an exercise in industrial chic – think stark, unpainted walls, one of which is lined with design, film and architecture tomes. However, while many come for its signature coffee (served with marshmallow crème topping), what sets it apart from other cafés are its cavernous co-working area, and an exhibition space that doubles as a cinema.

**61 Thalang Rd;
fb.com/bookhemian**



Krabi

Yaowarat Rd.

Thalang

Dibu

Phu

Torry's Ice Cream

Ironically, this sweet venue is located on a street that was once the island's most salacious. Formerly Phuket's famous brothel district, Soi Rommanee is allegedly named after a working girl from Romania. Today, it's home to a pretty row of brightly-coloured, restored shophouses, among which you'll find this retro-inspired ice cream boutique. Sample delicious and unusual flavours, such as lychee sorbet and durian, all handmade from scratch.

16 Soi Rommanee; torrysicecream.com



Arun's Roti Shop

Manas Dada, better known as Arun, is the owner of this eponymous roti shop on Thalang Road, Old Phuket Town's main thoroughfare. A fluent speaker of Thai, English, Malay and Arabic – courtesy of 20 years living in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia – Arun serves up the best *roti* (fried bread) on the island. Pair it with beef curry and a cup of *cha chak* (pulled tea), before rounding off your meal with some off-the-menu *roti bom* (sugar-covered roti dipped in condensed milk).

124 Thalang Rd



DATES

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Three festivals to brighten your travels this month

i Light Marina Bay **SINGAPORE, 3-26 MAR**

This month, the waterfront promenade around Marina Bay will play host to striking light installations dreamed up by artists from nine countries. There'll be three distinct hubs – Art-Zoo, a creative play garden populated by giant inflatable animals; The Fantastical World, which will focus on sustainability-themed activities; and Gastrobeats, home to food stalls and an old-school carnival. **ilightmarinabay.sg**

Hoi An Lantern Festival **HOI AN, 11 MAR**

Taking place every month on the night of the full moon, this festival sees the picturesque streets of Hoi An's Old Town closed to traffic. Electric lights are banned, and are instead replaced by hundreds of coloured lanterns. Locals pay respects to their ancestors at the town's temples, and by floating lanterns down the Thu Bon River. Join the throngs enjoying the spectacle from the banks and bridges, or launch your own lantern from a sampan out on the water.

Attuvela Mahotsavam **KOCHI, 29-30 MAR**

This water festival, which celebrates the Goddess Bhagavathy, takes place at Elankavu Bhagavath Temple, two hours south of Kochi. The highlight of the celebrations is a procession of colourful canoes carrying huge illuminated replicas of the temple down the Muvattupuzha River from Attuvela Kadavu.