



Is it still possible to have an authentic travel experience in Thailand?

Recent news of one of Thailand's most beautiful islands - Ko Tachai - closing due to 'excessive tourism' has sparked questions on whether it is still possible for travellers to experience the country without heavily impacting the environment.

This news comes 20 years on from the release of Alex Garland's cult novel 'The Beach' which inspired mass wanderlust to Thailand's turquoise shores. It seems travellers are still striving to find their own slice of paradise and authentic castaway experience. The question is, 20 years on (and swathes of tourists later), can Thailand still offer it? And is it possible to visit this beautiful destination in a way that doesn't add to the detrimental weight of tourism?

For **Rickshaw Travel** the answer to both questions is **yes**

Rickshaw believes travel can be a huge social and environmental benefit to the destinations they work with and they aim to maximise the benefit of tourism whilst minimising the impact and working as sustainably as possible. Each trip encompasses this meaningful travel ethos in some way. It could be that guests stay in an eco-friendly resort that supports the local environment, journey out into the countryside to help a local farmer, stay in a local family home or visit a community based tourism project. Through meaningful travel practices Rickshaw bring travellers closer to the country and community they're visiting.

Here Rickshaw Travel highlights the top Thailand trips to escape the tourist crowds and embrace local life

Hold the beach at bay and [experience village life by the river](#)

The area of Khlong Noi is just a 30 minute drive from Surat Thani (the main hub for tourists arriving into South Thailand by sleeper train) yet it remains relatively undiscovered. On this home-stay a Thai family warmly welcome travellers to experience 'Village Life by the River'. Guests can enjoy a guided boat tour along the river and visit a village community project where the locals clean the river and mangroves to ensure their fishing practices are maintained. Guests can also assist the villagers with shrimp fishing, palm leaf weaving, carpentry or other daily activities before relaxing in the gardens alongside the river and indulging in a traditional Thai evening meal with the host family.

This 2 day bite-size trip costs £178 including 1 night's accommodation based on 2 people sharing, meals, arrival transfer and guided boat excursion.

Get lost amongst the [giant trees and lakes of Khao Sok](#)

In the climatic end of Garland's book, main character Richard finds himself alone and stir-crazy in the middle of the jungle. Rickshaw Travel doesn't suggest travellers go insane in the jungle but do recommend discovering a different side of Thailand - the thick jungles and vast blue lakes of Khao Sok.

This rare Thailand adventure trip will take travellers deep into wildest Thailand, where they'll explore enchanting rainforests and swim in sparkling natural lakes. Guests will overnight in two unique places: two nights in the Anurak Community Lodge in Khao Sok National Park, a stunning location hidden amongst the limestone cliffs; and one night floating on a secluded floating house raft, surrounded by spectacular rock formations jutting from the glassy lake. The staff in the Jungle Lodge are all from the local community and the guides will happily point out the wildlife and talk about the local conservation projects.

This 4 day bite-size trip costs from £345 per person and includes 3 night's accommodation with breakfast (based on 2 people sharing), most meals, transport, canoe excursion and English-speaking guide.

Escape Ko Phi Phi's crowds

The famous jaw-dropping 'beach' was the iconic destination in Alex Garland's story and later film adaption. With its powder-white sands, turquoise waters and towering limestone mountains, *the beach* is painted as the ultimate Eden. But since rapidly gaining in popularity among day trippers, Ko Phi Phi's 'castaway' Maya Bay is experiencing an uncomfortable weight of tourists.

For those keen to find a more authentic slice of beach life in Thailand Rickshaw Travel suggests:

[Discover the flavours of Ko Lanta](#)

Ko Lanta offers the ultimate combination of white sands and mouth-watering dishes. On this trip guests can try their hand at cooking up traditional Thai sizzling coconut curries, fresh papaya salads and spicy noodles on a half-day cooking class. After learning the local secrets of Thai cuisine they can spend the rest of the time exploring hidden lagoons by canoe. Profits from the local cookery school go directly to [Lanta Animal Welfare](#).

This 4 day bite-size trip costs from £168 per person and includes 3 night's accommodation with breakfast (based on 2 people sharing) and half day local cookery class.

Find your own beach and go [Robinson Crusoe on Ko Hai](#)

Ko Hai is a teeny spec of an island just off the coast of Southern Thailand (Krabi province). Hidden well away from the tourist throngs those hungering for quiet relaxation in an archetypal tropical paradise will find it here. The islands of the Trang archipelago haven't been discovered by mass tourism yet, which means the coral remains largely unspoilt and snorkellers will be amazed at the spectacular marine life just below the water.

This 4 day bite-size trip costs from £155 per person and includes 3 night's accommodation with breakfast (based on 2 people sharing) and

transfers.

Explore [secret islands and snorkelling lagoons](#)

Of all the islands in Thailand, Ko Yao Yai is one of the least developed - an ideal spot for travellers seeking a remote desert island experience. Ko Yao Yai lies in an inland sea south of Thailand, surrounded by uninhabited rocky islands that thrust up from the water, full of secluded coves and tiny, hidden bays. Ko Yao Yai itself has a few residents, but hardly any tourists. Guests will spend two nights on Ko Yao Yai island, staying in a beach bungalow on a white sandy palm-lined beach. The experience includes a longtail boat trip to hidden lagoons, abandoned beaches and superb snorkelling spots. Afterwards travellers can enjoy southern Thai seafood in the local open air restaurant.

This 3 day bite-size trip costs from £258 per person and includes 2 night's accommodation with breakfast (based on 2 people sharing), return ferry, transfers and longtail boat excursion with snorkelling.

Rickshaw Travel's drive towards providing meaningful and sustainable travel experiences sits hand-in-hand with the need to ensure all the wildlife excursions featured are done so responsibly and prioritise the welfare of the animals. As part of Rickshaw Travel's mission they have chosen to support Save Elephant Foundation as a local project in Thailand. This project is dedicated to caring for and rehabilitating elephants in Thailand and the Elephant Nature Park is one of its ventures. This means that as well as having the opportunity to visit the park during the new trip, holidaymakers can also choose to make a one off contribution to the project when booking, with all donations going towards feeding the elephant herd a healthy diet, providing the best veterinary care for their rehabilitation and constructing chain-free enclosures so the herd can roam free 24 hours a day.

New - [Experience Elephant Encounters in Chiang Mai](#)

Rickshaw Travel has introduced the option to visit the Elephant Nature Park in Chiang Mai. At the Elephant Nature Park, visitors can enjoy seeing the elephants in a more natural environment, with no riding whatsoever. The Park's mission is to promote sustainable elephant-friendly tourism by rescuing and caring for elephants that have previously been mistreated in camps and circuses. The park is home to more than 35 elephants and travellers can walk with them, watch them play and even give them a bath.

This 3-day bite-size trip costs from £188 per person (based on two sharing) and includes 2 night's accommodation with breakfast and excursion to the elephant nature park with guide, lunch and return transfers.

A minimum of three bite-size trips are required to build a personalised itinerary. To find out more about Rickshaw Travel's projects and to see the full range of trips and itineraries please visit: www.rickshawtravel.co.uk or call Rickshaw Travel's team of experts on: 01273 934 823.

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Note to editors

Rickshaw Travel's drive towards developing meaningful travel experiences was recognised in 2015 when they were awarded the Travelife Better Places Partner by ABTA.

Please note: All prices correct at time of release but may be subject to change - please refer to www.rickshawtravel.co.uk for the latest pricing information or get in touch with Vicky Norman at Heaven Publicity: Vicky@heavenpublicity.co.uk

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Rickshaw Travel has been providing enriching, experiential and meaningful travel since the company was launched in 2008. Now covering 24 destinations across Africa, Asia, Central and South America, its individual approach to independent exploration enables adventurous holidaymakers to experience the real spirit of a local culture. Rickshaw's dedicated team of Travel Specialists create unique travel itineraries using a combination of 2-3 day bite-sized trips which include all accommodation, local transport and excursions; ensuring a hassle-free holiday. They are committed to providing meaningful travel experiences and use a mixture of transport including sleeper trains, private transfers with friendly local guides and drivers or even tuk-tuks to link their trips together so each journey becomes part of the adventure!