

Experience Asia



Beaches and beyond in ever-popular Thailand	p2
A taste of adventure, shopping tips in Phuket	p3
Stay longer in Singapore: Slings and Supertrees	p4
Unbeatable shopping and satays in Kuala Lumpur	p5
KUL's Batu Caves, fishy spa treatments	p6

Experience Asia

Phuket Popular

Phuket is Thailand's largest island and is popular with Kiwis looking for a beach break. "Phuket really is a staple for Kiwis," says local Tourism Authority of Thailand rep Maieanne Ouwehand. "The packages are priced competitively against other Thailand beach options."

When To Go

Phuket has two distinct seasons, but the destination is warm and humid year-round. The 'rainy' season is May-Oct (usually only an average of a couple of hours rain a day) and the dry season Nov-Apr.

Phuket 101

For clients heading to Phuket, suggest they swing by the information stands near the luggage claim at Phuket Airport where there are free maps, up-to-date travel info and tour options.



It's Business Time

Debra Duke, from House of Travel Papamoa (on left) and BobbyLea MacDonald from HoT Mt Maunganui are pictured relaxing in JQ business class on their way to Singapore for the JQ Experience Asia fam. Both agents say they were impressed with the product, and would recommend it to their clients.



Phuket's New Beach Club Scene

A relative new-comer to the Phuket scene are the beach clubs. The first opened in Phuket in 2008 and now there are a number of beachfront establishments offering loungers, pools, bars and dining. The Re Ka Ta Beach Club (pictured) at Kata's Boathouse Hotel is worth a mention. Designed by the people behind Bali's iconic Ku De Ta, it features a pool and café—and transforms into a neon-laden club at night. See rekataphuket.com

Thai Appeal Still Growing For Kiwis



A record number of Kiwis are now travelling to Thailand—taking advantage of increased air capacity, the strong exchange rate and a penchant for trying something new, says local Tourism Authority of Thailand representative Marieanne Ouwehand.

Kiwi arrivals to Thailand grew to 101,092, up 13% on 2011, show the Thai Ministry of Tourism and Sports statistics. This year the NTO says it expects to report further growth, as Kiwi demand for Thailand continues to climb.

"The better the airfares, the competitive packages, the more attractive Thailand has become as a holiday destination for Kiwis," says Ouwehand.

And the growth is coming from across the market sectors, she adds, including the family and medical tourism markets.

"The length of the flight is not such

a barrier to family travel any more and given the increasingly competitive fares in the market, it's become a more popular option for families. The spa and health market to Thailand has become popular too."

Most Kiwi travellers head to Thailand over our winter months—also the destination's low season, making the packages more competitive with other shorter-haul destinations. "It's a win-win really, lower hotel rates and they get to escape the New Zealand winter," she says.

Water Reminder

Remind Phuket-bound clients to only consume bottled water—even when brushing their teeth. Most hotels provide complimentary bottled water daily, or a bottle of water is around 60c from one of the many convenience stores.

Dining Out

There's a huge range of dining options in Phuket from local Thai... to almost everything. One restaurant to recommend to clients is Phuket's Baan Rim Pa. It overlooks Patong, remains in the island's top 10 restaurants—and it's also said to be popular with visiting celebrities. A popular, and very affordable, Patong dining option is Kaab Gluay restaurant on Phrabaramree Rd. A favourite with the locals the traditional Thai restaurant is basic, but is well known for its great food and. Remind clients the dishes, and spice level, are made for the locals, but the kitchen will happily adjust for the 'farang' palate. Mains are around THB120 (approx \$5-\$6).

Getting There

Given the increased capacity and the rise of low cost carriers within Asia, Kiwis now have the option of flying to Bangkok and on to Phuket; or via Singapore, as offered by Jetstar. JQ operates thrice-weekly AKL-SIN services with good connections through to HKT (with just enough time at Changi Airport for a quick shop). The Jetstar Asia flight time from Singapore to Phuket is around 85 mins. Phuket's popular Patong beach is around an hours drive from the airport.

Phuket Beyond The Coastline



Beyond the lounge-lined beaches and colourful chaos of the market stalls Phuket offers a huge range of land-based touring options for those looking to explore the mountainous isle. Elephant treks remain a staple with first-time visitors and families with a number of operators offering everything from short treks to day tours. Siam Safari Nature Tours in Chalong Hills is a recommended option for those looking for a brief insight into Thai culture for those first-time and family groups. It's a slick and highly commercialised operation, but lighthearted informative guides talk through the basics of Thai culture and rural life, with demonstrations on rice farming, coconut processing and Thai

cooking, and of course, elephant treks. It's not a graceful experience trying to adjust to the loping gait of an Indian elephant—but there's something about their sheer size and majestic trunks that converts even the cynics. *As with all animal experiences it pays to opt for a reputable company to avoid disappointment. Siam Safaris has a strong conservation focus. Pictured with a couple of friendly locals is Target Travel's Daniel Bloomfield, on left, with Julie Sloane from Travel Options United Travel, HoT Mt Maunganui's BobbyLea MacDonald, Mick Cottrell from Jetstar, Debra Duke from HoT Papamoa (back) Accor's Jane Reese and Julie Creelman from NZ Travel Brokers.

Experience Asia



Retail Therapy

A visit to streets lined with rows and rows of colourful market stalls and shops is a ubiquitous part of a Phuket stay.

Much of the stock is fake designer brands and quality-wise you often get what you pay for. The international rules of bartering apply in most shops, so urge clients to have a clear understanding of the exchange rate (see below). For clients looking for more upscale bargains, US outlet shop firm Premium Outlets has opened an outlet mall not far from Patong beach.

There's over 300 brand names at the mall, which is open 1000-2100 daily. For details see outletmallthailand.com

Quick THB Converter

Local Tourism Authority of Thailand representative Marieanne Ouwehand has a handy tip to help clients easily convert between NZD and THB. "If the amount quoted is THB100—take off the last 0, and halve the remainder, which means THB100 is around NZD5."

Spend and Stay

The average Kiwi traveller's expenditure in Thailand for 2011 was THB4034pp per day (around \$160), show the Thai Ministry of Tourism and Sports figures. The average length of stays said to be around 12.6 days. The most popular destinations with Kiwis included Bangkok, Phuket, Chiang Mai and Koh Samui.

Adventurous Phuket



Adventure junkie, Accor's Jane Reese, says ATV touring is a Phuket must-do

Sitting, rocking back and forth, knee deep in muddy water somewhere in the midst of a jungle really wasn't how I pictured this day turning out. But with a heave and a spin of wheels I'm off—quad biking Phuket-style.

ATV (all terrain vehicle) Phuket Tours are just one of the many adventure activities offered on Phuket—and are an ideal option come rain or shine.

Following a transfer to the base and safety briefing riders of all levels and ages take to their bikes and weave through the jungle.

The operation is set on 400 acres and riders navigate through giant pot holes and flooded areas racing up hills and skidding down slopes—it's a must-do for adrenalin junkies.

One-hour ATV tours are available, 'but the two-hour option really allows riders to get adventurous and tear through the jungle [under the eye of a watchful tour guide]', says new ATV tour ambassador, Accor's Jane Reese. "It's just brilliant, I had

so much fun—it's my trip highlight," she adds.

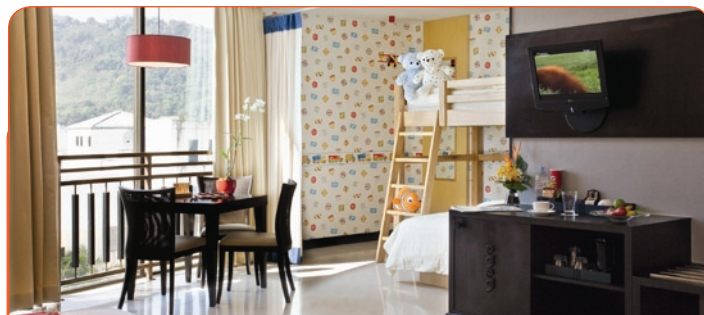
Combination packages incorporating elephant treks, a flying fox or white water rafting are also available. For more details on the ATV tours contact Adventure World.

Shoot 'Em Up

The Phuket Shooting Range complex is home to a selection of big boys toys. As well as the shooting range, there's go-carting, archery, paintball and even a cobra show and snake farm. For more details see phuketshooting.com

Night-time Exploring

For an adults-only cultural experience with a twist direct clients to Patong's Bangla Road. Closed off to vehicles the area offers a colourful insight into Thai nightlife. From playing Connect Four at the bar to 'adult' shows, Bangla Road's got it all. There is a plethora of bars where beers cost anywhere from THB90 to THB900—depending on the included entertainment (think ping pong balls).



Family-Friendly Mecure

Patong Beach's Mercure Phuket Deevanna is a staple with Kiwis, increasingly the family market. The three-star property is centrally located (just down from the Hard Rock Hotel) and sports two pools, a spa, gym and restaurant. A key selling point for Kiwis is the hotel's 10 family rooms featuring bunks, says Accor sales manager Jane Reese. The property continues to be a top-seller in the Kiwi market and also sports conferencing space and a free kids club. Wholesalers have details.

Jetstar's International Business Class

Fly non-stop from
Auckland to 
Singapore

For details, and to book, [click here](#) or contact your preferred wholesaler.

jetstar.com

Jetstar 

Conditions apply. Fares are one-way, web only and include a 30kg checked baggage allowance.

Experience Asia

Terminal One

Jetstar now has a fleet of 20 aircraft based in Singapore, all operating out of Changi T1 which makes connecting to and from Jetstar Asia flights quick and easy. Clients with a little time in transit can explore the shops, restaurants and a host of quirky features. Highlights include a fish spa (20-min fish spa foot treatment is SGD22) and a rooftop swimming pool (entry around SGD13). See changiairport.com

... SIN For Free

A transit at Changi Airport need not cost the earth. The airport has free Wi-Fi, or clients can try one of the free foot and calf massage stations. There's also the world's first airport Butterfly Garden in T3. Dining options range from budget to high end and there's a movie theatre in T2 and T3.

Singapore, Stay A Little Longer

The Singapore Tourism Board has been urging Kiwis to stay a little longer and experience more—and the NTO says more New Zealanders are now extending their stopover to a three-night or longer stay.

"We've seen a huge growth in that since the launch of Jetstar," says STB spokesperson Monique Jones. "New Zealand is becoming more and more of a key market for us."

The biggest Kiwi market sector said to be opting for an extended stay is

now the family market, with family-friendly Sentosa Island attracting the (Mer)lion's share of the business.

Singapore offers an ever-growing range of attractions for travellers of all ages. Family-friendly highlights include Singapore Zoo, Night Safari, Jurong Bird Park, Singapore Cable Car and of course Universal Studios Singapore on Sentosa itself.

For the grown ups, the SAR offers a heady mix of traditional and contemporary experiences. Visitors can still experience the trishaws, pearl luggers and the cultural enclaves such as Arab Street, Little India and Chinatown.

Those looking for some of Singapore's newer attractions can try the Sentosa, Marina Bay Sands the legendary Zouk mega-club or the redeveloped Clarke Quay precinct, which all offer restaurants, bars and a range of events.

Gardens By The Bay

One of Singapore's newest icons, visible from the SkyPark, is Gardens By The Bay. The 110 acre park area sports two giant domed glasshouses and steel 'supertrees' which branch out some 50m above ground. There's also restaurants and a viewing platform. See gardensbythebay.org.sg



Singapore Slinging

In a nod to Singapore's colonial park, urge first-time visitors to Singapore to stop at the Raffles Hotel's Long Bar for a signature Singapore Sling. It's not cheap (SGD26 for one cocktail), but it's an experience steeped in history...and there's still peanut shells littered across the floor. The cocktail was invented at the hotel back in 1915 by Ngian Tong Boon.

Singapore Slinging: Jetstar's Mick Cottrell and NZ Travel Brokers' Julie Creelman enjoying a Singapore Sling and peanuts at Raffles Hotel's Long Bar.



Sky High In SIN

Pictured having a cocktail at Ku De Ta, atop the Skypark yesterday afternoon, are: Mick Cottrell from Jetstar, Julie Sloane from Travel Options United Travel, NZ Travel Brokers' Julie Creelman and Debra Duke from HoT Whitianga.

Singapore's dramatic Marina Bay Sands development is a must-see for first-timers to Singapore. Reaching 57 stories into the sky, heading to the top of the tripod is one of the best ways to get a panoramic view over the city and its icons. Easily accessible by taxi, or the Bayfront stop on the MRT, the Skypark observation deck is located on the 57th floor. Entry is SGD20, but the views are awe-inspiring. Drinks aren't cheap at the top (SGD16 for a beer), but it's worth it to sit back and enjoy the view, especially at sunset.

MRT vs Taxi

Singapore's MRT rail system makes it easy to navigate around Singapore.

A single ride is from SGD3 and clients can move between the four underground lines. The MRT does operate from the airport (from T3) into the city—but it requires three train changes and takes a while. For those clients who are short on time, urge them to take a taxi. It generally takes 15-30 mins to get to the airport with taxis fares around SGD20-SGD40.



Fly non-stop from Auckland to Singapore

For details, and to book, [click here](#) or contact your preferred wholesaler.

jetstar.com

Jetstar

Conditions apply. Fares are one way, web only and have no checked baggage allowance.

Experience Asia



KUL's Unbeatable Shopping

There's a small stream of water flowing off the end of my locks as I fumble in my purse for the change to buy an umbrella from a passing street vendor.

The heavens have opened, and the next mall is a 500m dash away—but what's a little water in the pursuit of bargains. This is the globe's fourth best city for shopping after all!

Kuala Lumpur beat Hong Kong, Dubai and Paris in the latest *CNNGo* shopping poll, which ranks cities in terms of getting around, value, variety and experience. Combine that with the year-end sales on through to Jan and it's a shopping mecca! From designer to discount, Kuala Lumpur's shopping options appear almost endless.

In the city centre there's a number of huge shopping malls—with places like Suria KLCC and Pavilion offering the global high street and designer brands while other malls such as Sungei Wang Plaza and Berjaya Times Square are lined with a mix of affordable local brands.

For clients looking for knock-offs

Kuala Lumpur's Petaling St markets in Chinatown won't disappoint. Watches, bags, clothing and shoes are all on sale, at a 'very nice price'. The markets open from around 1030 with most stalls open through to 2300. For the best atmosphere, urge clients to visit at night. Bartering is a must and vendors tend to also drop their prices around 30 mins before closing.

It's about a MYR15-20 taxi ride from central KUL to Petaling St, but ask for a metered taxi, especially for the journey back.

Local Dining

Most visitors to Kuala Lumpur want to sample some of the local fare. Hawker stalls spring up in pockets around the city, particularly at night, offering cheap and tasty food. For cautious clients looking for local food direct them to the Lot 10 Hutong. Located on the lower ground level of the Lot 10 mall, the hutong boasts 33 eateries (some which have been open for several generations). See lot10hutong.com

Sky High In KUL

Stretching 452m into the sky, the Petronas twin towers dominate the Kuala Lumpur skyline. Those who want to get up close and personal with the giant structures—there is public access to level 86—will need to pre-book at the ticket-booth on the ground floor (cost is MYR80). Only 900 people daily can make the journey to the top, including the walk across the SkyBridge on level 41.

... Lychee and Lights

A drink at the SkyBar atop the Traders Hotel overlooking the Petronas Towers has become a must-do for visitors to the city. Lychee daiquiris are the specialty at the bar. Due to its popularity urge clients to pre-book a table to ensure an uninterrupted view.

Getting Around

A cosmopolitan city with a mix of heritage and high tech, Kuala Lumpur continues to improve its transport offering for tourists.

With a monorail, walkways and largely English-speaking taxi drivers it's easy to navigate around. Trains are generally the quickest option, and a new above ground walkway constructed around the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre area and over to the Petronas Towers, makes it quicker (and drier) to walk in the area.

A free bus service is now also operating between Suria KLCC and Bukit Bintang, and Bukit Bintang and Chinatown. The purple GOKL bus has onboard Wi-Fi and buses operate every 15 mins at off-peak times.

Satay and Showbiz

Camera crews and cuisine were on the menu for agents on Jetstar's Experience Asia in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The consultants were guests of honour at celebrity chef Liza Zainol's cooking school—attempting five local Malaysian dishes, while the event was filmed for an upcoming television series.

Satay was, of course, on the menu as the agents battled it out for a shot at the title.

Cuisine plays an important part in Malaysian culture and under the stern direction of lively local chef Zainol the group got an insight in to Malaysian cuisine and culture.

For recipes or more details on the Cooking Class, see sweetazza.com.my



United Travel's Julie Sloane with chef Liza. Julie's team won the title of 'most delicious' food at the culmination of the cooking school.

Jetstar's International Business Class

Fly non-stop from Auckland to  Singapore

For details, and to book, [click here](#) or contact your preferred wholesaler.

jetstar.com

Jetstar 

Conditions apply. Fares are one-way, web only and include a 30kg checked baggage allowance.

Experience Asia



Fish Spa Treatments

No trip to Malaysia is complete without experiencing a fish spa. There's nothing quite like having your tootsies nibbled by around 100 little fish—and it's an experience to remember. It's not something all people enjoy, but urge clients to give it a go. Most places will offer a refund if clients don't like it. But advise them to start with the little fish first, before moving up to the larger (more ticklish) fish. There are numerous Fish Spas across KUL, charging around MYR25 for 30 mins.

Eight Times Daily

Jetstar Asia operates eight daily services between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. The frequency makes it easy for Kiwi passengers to travel between the two destinations—with good connections to Jetstar's Auckland-Singapore services, says JQ's Mick Cottrell.

Going Batu In KUL

The towering limestone formations known as the Batu Caves offer a cultural insight not far from Kuala Lumpur.

Said to be around 400 million years old the caves have a long and varied history; once used as shelters by the indigenous Temuan people the caves are now some to several Hindu shrines.

With 272 steps to the entry of the so-called Temple Caves, clients need to have a base level of fitness, but the climb (past the monkeys) is worth the effort. There's even the chance to be blessed by a Hindu priest—for those who feel so inclined.

The Batu Caves are located 12km from KUL city centre, and are around a 30 min drive. Tip: Urge clients who



may be concerned about the water dripping through the caves to take an umbrella.

Meeting Murugan: Travel Options United Travel's Julie Sloane, on left, with Mick Cottrell from Jetstar, Debra Duke from House of Travel Papamoa and NZ Travel Brokers' Julie Creelman pose beneath the 42.7m statue of Murugan (a Hindu deity) at the Batu Caves near Kuala Lumpur.

City Oasis

KUL's Lake Gardens is a 91.6 hectares oasis of parks and gardens located in the city. As well as a jogging track, there are bikes for hire and a playground for children. The area is also home to a Bird Park and Deer Park.

Shopping In Changi

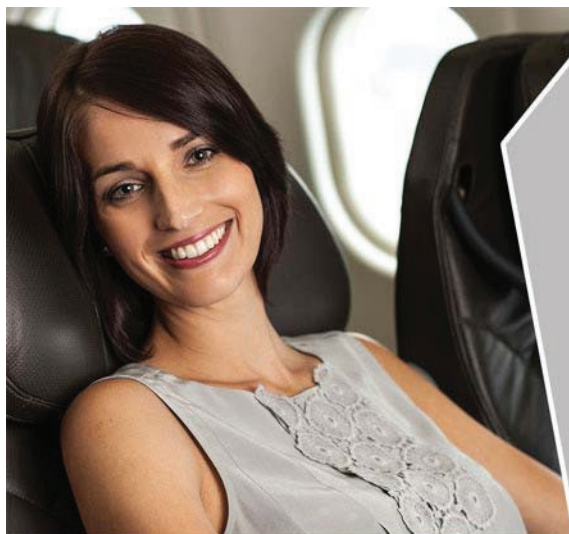
Jetstar's thrice-weekly AKL-SIN services operate to and from Changi Airport's Terminal One, connecting on to the growing number of Jetstar Asia flights (also at T1).

For clients in transit there's a wide range of shops from the designer brands to high street stores, including shoe store Charles & Keith (a hit with the Kiwi agents on the fam!) to help pass the time. As well as a number of restaurants there's a roof top bar and even a fish spa and reflexology outlet. Free Wi-Fi and electronic device charging stations are available in the terminal and most outlets are open 0600-2400. See changiairport.com

Ideally Located Novotel

There are endless hotel options for all budgets in Kuala Lumpur, but for those looking for something centrally-located, the Novotel Kuala Lumpur City Centre is a short walk to the KL Convention Centre and local landmark the Petronas Towers.

It's also adjacent to the huge Pavilion centre, which features a multi-storey mall (including all the main high street and couture brands from around the globe) as well as a dining precinct. With a business centre, pool and fitness centre the hotel caters for business and leisure travellers—and those staying on one of the hotel's six premier floors also get the use of its Premier Lounge. The lounge offers a host of free value add options such as daily breakfast and evening cocktails and canapes. There's also free in-room Wi-Fi.



Jetstar's International Business Class

Fly non-stop from
Auckland to  Singapore

For details, and to book, [click here](#) or contact your preferred wholesaler.

jetstar.com

Jetstar 

Conditions apply. Fares are one-way, web only and include a 30kg checked baggage allowance.