

Travel



Samui Sunset

Koh Samui in the Gulf of Thailand is an island of sea, sand and sun and for those who venture to the far northeast of the island near Big Buddha; sunsets. The Sunset Bar is nothing more than a rustic shack but it's the perfect place to relax over a few cold Singha beers at the end of a round of golf at either Santiburi Samui Golf Country Club or Bophut Hills Golf Club. >

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Samui Country Club





Pool at Hansar Samui

Now all golfers can fly and play golf all around the region as new air routes have made South East Asia more accessible than it ever has been. Thailand has always been a popular country to visit but there are new destinations opening in the Kingdom to provide more golfing opportunities for seasoned visitors.



Koh Samui isn't a new resort island as travellers have been visiting it for a few decades now. Its small airport always accepted flights from Bangkok but now Kuala Lumpur is serviced by direct flights on both Bangkok Airways and Firefly. It's an island of just 250km² and to circumnavigate it taking in a few sights occupies most of the day. The settlements and resort areas grip the sandy fringes with most of the resorts jockeying for prime beachfront locations.

ISLAND GOLF

There are several golfing options on the island with the optimal one being Santiburi Samui Country Club. It's the island's only 18-hole course and rated one of the best island courses in the whole of South

Bophut Hills Clubhouse

East Asia. Ideally every golfer should play this course but two smaller nine-hole courses provide good backup for those seeking a fun round of golf or

IDEALLY EVERY GOLFER SHOULD PLAY THIS COURSE BUT TWO SMALLER NINE-HOLE COURSES PROVIDE GOOD BACKUP FOR THOSE SEEKING A FUN ROUND OF GOLF OR TWO IN THE TROPICAL WEATHER.



Wat Plai Laem Koh Samui

two in the tropical weather.

Santiburi Samui is situated on one of the highest points of the island and is mostly covered in coconut trees, one of Koh Samui's important agricultural commodities. This course of 6,930 yards (gold tees) and 4,717 (red) has

been open for twelve years or so. Serious golfers have no choice but to play it but it's also considered one of the region's best island courses. It has a reputation as a hard and frustrating course and losing balls is something that golfers need to factor into their game. Winds and dramatic rises and falls along a few holes add to the challenge of a round here. With such an undulating course, it's no surprise that buggies are a pre-requisite.

Bophut Hills Golf Club is another hillside course but less undulating than Santiburi. It's an unsophisticated course of just nine holes (Par 27) and at rates that match the setting and facilities. A nine-hole game costs just RM95 while 18 holes is RM160 and caddies, at least one per group, cost RM15/nine holes. The course has been crafted through tall coconut palms and several white-sand bunkers create sufficient challenge for those seeking a relaxed game or a game for families and beginners to hone their skills.

Bophut Hills

HANSAR SAMUI OVERLOOKS THE BAY WITH JUST A FEW BOATS MOORED OFFSHORE BUT WITHOUT THE NOISE AND COMMOTION THAT IS TYPICAL OF SOME OTHER THAI BEACH RESORTS.

The small clubhouse serves cold drinks and simple meals at very competitive prices. There is also a small office come club rental hire facility. This is very much a rural course but one suspects, in years to come, a developer will come along and snap it up.

HAPPY ISLAND HOME

Hansar stands for happiness; the surprising joy in providing the smallest touches for the grandest events. Hansar Samui



2nd fairway Santiburi

is situated along Bophut Bay, a peaceful backwater on an island that appears to have enough space for a multitude of resorts and yet provide the impression within each one that they almost have this island paradise all to themselves. Hansar Samui overlooks the bay with just a few boats moored offshore but without the noise and commotion that is typical of some other Thai beach resorts.

The resort adjoins Fisherman's Village with its beachside bars and restaurants, Friday evening walking markets and the brand new Wharf Shopping Mall to make it the perfect location for a relaxing holiday within close proximity to both golf courses. **G**

TRAVEL TIPS

1 GETTING THERE
Boutique airline Bangkok Airways (www.bangkokair.com) flies daily with an ideal golfing schedule. Flights depart Kuala Lumpur at 8.45am and arrive into Koh Samui just after 9am (Thai time being one hour behind Malaysia) and in time for breakfast. Return flights depart Koh Samui at 5.50pm. This means that if you take Friday off you can have three full days of golf should you return on Sunday afternoon but there are many reasons to remain a few extra days especially if you stay at luxurious resorts like the Hansar Samui. Bangkok Airways is a full service airline so there are no 'hidden' extra costs that usually add to the basic fares offered by budget airlines.

2 WHERE TO STAY
Hansar Samui (www.hansarsamui.com) on Bophut Beach is the perfect place to stay for golfers on Koh Samui. It is located literally minutes from the airport and breakfast awaits soon after touching down. Samui Hansar is situated on this peaceful beachfront beneath swaying coconut palms with just 74 deluxe rooms and suites, all with sea-facing views. After golf, luxuriate in the resort's LUXSA Spa that features spacious treatment rooms and a range of Thai therapies. H Bistro is the resort's seafront restaurant with views to-die-for overlooking the Gulf of Thailand. Thai and international cuisines are showcased but with a contemporary twist in tropical surroundings. The preferred seating is in the open, on the verandah, under the stars.

3 CONTACT
Santiburi Samui Country Club (T: +66 77 421-700, www.santiburi.com) and Bophut Hills Golf Club (+66 77 430-811, www.bophuthillsgolf.com).

