

Title:

Thailand Post Tsunamis

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529

Summary:

It is the dawn of a new morning in the beautiful Andaman Beach in Phuket, Thailand. Vendors start arriving with their colourful goods; resort workers conscientiously prepare the many lounge chairs and umbrellas that will shield the noonday sun. But the tourists are nowhere to be found.

Keywords:

thailand,thai, thais, thailand tsunami, tsunami, tsunamis

Article Body:

It is the dawn of a new morning in the beautiful Andaman Beach in Phuket. Vendors start arriving with their colourful goods; resort workers conscientiously prepare the many lounge chairs and umbrellas that will shield the noonday sun. The masseuses are waiting near the trees, chatting as they wait for customers. Life goes on for these Thais who depend on tourism for their livelihood. Everything is as it has always been, except for one important detail.

The tourists are nowhere to be found.

After the devastating tsunami that hit this once tourist-dense area of Southeast Asia the day after Christmas in 2004, the number of tourists in this picturesque Thai destination has gone down to a mere handful. Just a year ago you would have seen an almost frenzied horde of foreigners filling the beaches and the resorts, but today the picture is less festive, and more sombre.

However, the resilience of the people of Thailand is evident everywhere, especially where the tsunami's devastation hit the strongest. They are picking up their lives, continuing to perform their daily duties even though there is overwhelming evidence that things have definitely changed.

Tourism in areas near the coast of Thailand is at an all-time low. Resort operators are feeling the significant lack in tourist arrivals. Most hotels can only book less than ten percent of their capacity -despite cut-price rates and cheap packages being offered to lure back the tourists. In their frustration,

operators now blame unfair media reporting that focused solely on the tsunami, but failed to report how these places have 'bounced back'.

And the truth of the matter is, they're right. There really is no reason now not to return. The areas that were most damaged by the calamity is certainly back on its feet. The west coast of Thailand (which bore the brunt of the tsunami) is bouncing back, and the infrastructure is back in place. Just take a drive along the western coast, and you'll be greeted by such striking natural beauty, the same view that brought travelers here in the first place. Pristine beaches like Kata Beach, which was spared from the vicious waves, remains one of the most beautiful in the area, the gorgeous Phi Phi island is as idyllic as ever, and even the so-called 'James Bond Island' off Phang Nga Province is as lovely as it was before the tsunami. Travelling to and from islands is back to normal, with boat transfers from the mainland all fully operational.

If you want a taste of paradise minus the crowds, and at extremely wallet-friendly prices, there has never been a better time to visit the western coast of Thailand. All the amenities and travel conveniences are in place. The cost of a great room on the beach and a delicious meal is achingly low. Even the wily street vendors are offering their goods at genuine bargain prices. The wonderful scenery is undeniably back to its former beauty, and the Thais are as hospitable as ever. A little scarred perhaps, but there with a ready smile, and an infectious optimism. No doubt about it, the crowds will be back sooner than we think.