

- 1 Hua Laem is a fishing village on stilts
- 2 Kung Kraben bay - view from Faasai's penthouse accommodation
- 3 Faasai's lookout offers scenic views of its surroundings
- 4 Luk prakob herbal massage
- 5 Balinese-style thatched cottage in Faasai.
- 6 Faasai spa treatment herbal mix.
- 7 Wooden planks link Faasai's Balinese-style cottages



Today, the descendants of these survivors and the families of sea gypsies who had settled here, also many years ago, from the south of Thailand, form the bulk of the population living in the fishing village of **Hua Laem**, at the easterly tip of Kung Wiman.

The village comprises a cluster of wooden houses built on stilts over water and you are welcome to traipse on the walkways leading out from each home to the sea. Each morning, the settlement is a hive of activity as boats, laden with freshly caught fish, squid and crabs, return with their harvest, which are sorted into baskets and sold on the spot to traders or hauled off to the nearest market for sale.

Kung Wiman itself has a promenade lined with eating spots, where you can dine alfresco on a seafood meal ordered from waterfront stalls. Below the promenade is a sweeping sandy beach washed by gentle ocean waves. The sparkling blue sea is safe for swimming.



Nearby, the marine sanctuary of **Kung Kraben** bay is a delight to explore. A popular eco-attraction among tourists and environmentalists, the natural mangroves here are home to a rich variety of marine life. Take a boardwalk to look for fish, mudskippers, and scurrying crabs. And since the sanctuary is a habitat for the dugong or sea cow, you might even catch a glimpse of this rare sea mammal with a trunk-like snout, feeding on the sea grasses in the bay. Bottlenose dolphins, regularly spotted in this eastern part of Thailand, are also attracted to the sea-grass beds.

Beyond the sanctuary is a vast marine shrimp farming area that can also be visited. Vital to the local economy, the acidity of the water in the farms is closely monitored for its impact on the coastal environment.

For a possible and even closer encounter with wildlife, go kayaking in the bay among the mangroves and along the serene coastline. The Canadian canoes are easy to handle, even for first-timers, and as you glide slowly on the water, you are likely to see wading egret, brightly coloured kingfishers perched on stakes and mangrove whistlers.



With such natural beauty, it is not surprising that the focus of the holiday is focused on exploring the bay. Surin Laopha and her wife, Bronwen, who is a travel journalist, are kind enough to put their guests at their disposal during their holiday.

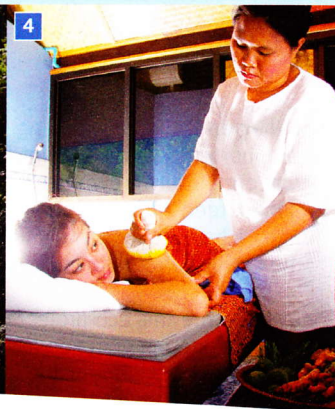
A mix of Balinese-style cottages, villas, and a spectacular bay is offered in a setting, complete with numerous butterflies and

True to the all-grown herbs from various traditional offerings in the menu of its cafe of Thai and Western

All the water in the bay is tapped from a spring while so

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With such natural surroundings, it is not surprising that Faasai Resort & Spa is focused on eco-tourism. Its owners, Surin Laopha and his New Zealand born wife, Bronwen Evans, a former broadcast journalist, are keen environmentalists and they have put in every effort to ensure that guests at their resort enjoy a nature-based holiday.

A mix of Balinese-style thatched roof cottages, villas and even a penthouse with a spectacular view of Kung Kraben bay is offered in a spacious 2-acre garden setting, complete with a pond, fountain and numerous trees and flowering plants. Little wonder, the garden is a sanctuary for butterflies and birds.

True to the all-natural theme, organically grown herbs from the garden are used in the various traditional Thai healing treatments offered in the resort's boutique spa. Wild herbs and vegetables also feature in the menu of its café, which offers a wide range of Thai and Western dishes.

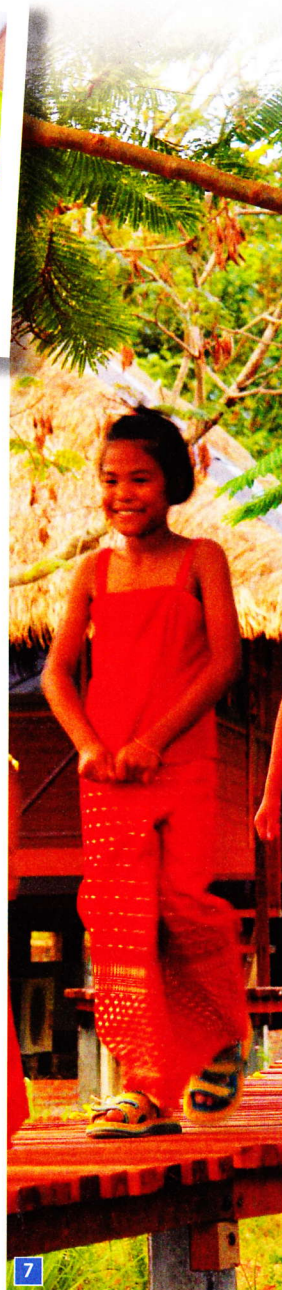
All the water in Faasai is chemical-free as it is tapped from an underground mineral spring while solar power is harnessed for

heating up water. Energy-efficient lighting is used and trees are planted as a carbon sink.

Faasai Resort & Spa's conservation efforts were duly recognized when it was named one of three Thai finalists for the Wild Asia Responsible Tourism Awards for 2008.

Faasai's spa is special. After all, it was set up by no other than Surin Laopha, who has a diploma in massage and traditional healing from Bangkok's famous Wat Po. A wide array of massages and healing treatments is available and all the spa therapists have also been trained at Wat Po. Massages can be enjoyed on open-air pavilions or inside private rooms. Herbal saunas are also available.

Apart from the spa, Faasai also has a swimming pool. In addition, guests can look forward to more activities being offered when the resort's new nature sanctuary, comprising a conservation lake and a recreation area, complete with springs, wetlands and a stream, is developed by next year. The natural lake is already a habitat for thousands of fish and is a magnet for wading birds. Here, apart from



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- 8 Friendly frog visitor at Faasai
- 9 Visitors feeding the Soro Brook carp teeming in pools at Namtokphlio National Park
- 10 Irrawaddy dolphin going through its paces at Oasis Sea World

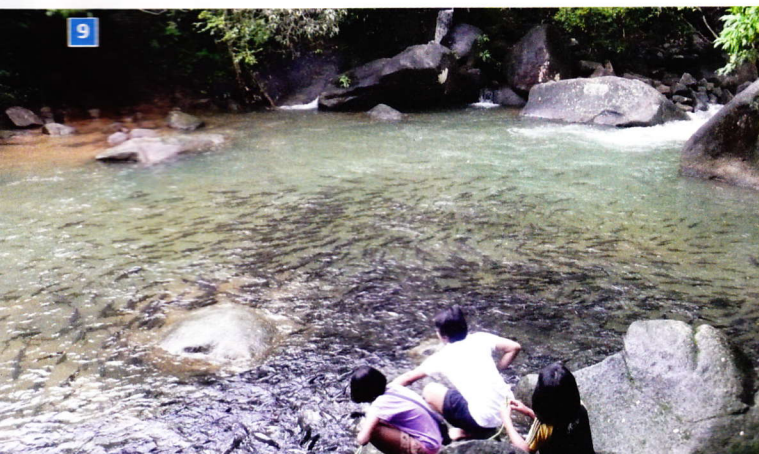
angling and wildlife watching, there will be opportunities to kayak, pick fruit from organically grown trees such as mangosteen, mangoes and longan, picnic, enjoy a barbecue or simply luxuriate in the scenic surroundings.

Even before this eco-project is ready, there is enough going on around Faasai to keep the activity-inclined visitor in Chanthaburi province busy.

For one, there is swimming with dolphins at **Oasis Sea World**, a dolphin park in **Laem Singh**, an hour's drive from Faasai. The only one of its kind in Thailand, the dolphin breeding and conservation center offers dolphin shows in a central pool and opportunities to swim and play with dolphins in another separate facility. The pink bottlenose and grey Irrawaddy dolphins will delight both young and old and the hour-long interactive program is tastefully conducted, without stress to these aquatic mammals.

There is also the nearby **Namtokphlio National Park**. A favorite of King Rama V who often came here to enjoy the mountainous park's natural beauty and peace in the 1880s, Namtokphlio is equally popular among Chanthaburi's visitors today. Though most of them are drawn to the park by its myriad waterfalls and numerous pools teeming with Soro Brook Carp, its dense forest is also a habitat for bear, pangolin, mousedeer, porcupine, white-handed gibbon, otter and some 90 species of birds. It is also rich in flora, especially orchids, palms, ferns and wild ginger.


Then there is the town of **Chanthaburi** itself, just half an hour from Faasai. Thanks to its unusual past, when it was part of French Cambodia from 1893 to 1905,



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Chanthaburi retains a certain charm. It has the oldest church in Thailand - the beautiful St Mary's Cathedral, which began as a chapel in 1711 - and several French colonial buildings. It also occupies an important place in Thai history for it was from here that one of Thailand's best known kings, Taksin the Great, marched his troops to the ancient capital of Ayuthaya to defeat the Burmese in 1767 and unify the country. Taksin Hat, a temple built in the shape of a Thai soldier's hat, is one of Chanthaburi's main monuments.

For those shopping for gems, Chanthaburi is the place to be as it has historically been a trading center for precious stones, particularly rubies and sapphires while food-lovers will enjoy its local speciality of noodles and crabs.

As an up-and-coming eco-destination, Chanthaburi province certainly has a lot going for it. 



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Getting there

Faasai Resort & Spa is a three-hour drive from Bangkok's Suvanabumi International Airport and central Bangkok. From the airport, take the free shuttle bus to the nearby coach terminal to take an air-conditioned coach to Chanthaburi. You can also take a coach from downtown Bangkok's Eastern Bus Terminal. The resort staff will pick you up at Chanthaburi. The coaches from the two terminals leave almost every hour and the ride is smooth and comfortable.

For bookings and more information on Faasai Resort & Spa, e-mail info@faasai.com, visit its website www.faaasai.com or contact Bronwen tel: (66) 086 889 2595 or the resort tel: (66) 039 417 404. Rates start from S\$30 per person (in an air-conditioned cottage with balcony), including breakfast.

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Back to nature at
FAASAI
RESORT & SPA

JUST OVER THREE HOURS by road from Bangkok, the tranquillity of Faasai and its surroundings are a world apart from the hurly-burly atmosphere of the Thai capital.

Here, you can go on walks in a nature sanctuary; kayak amid mangroves to catch glimpses of wildlife, swim with dolphins, explore a gem of a national park noted for its waterfalls and pools teeming with fish, chill out on a deserted beach or indulge in your favorite spa treatment.

As an eco-resort, Faasai enjoys a splendid jungle-like setting at the base of **Springwater Hill**, a protected reserve. A cool mist rolling in every morning down its verdant slopes adds an aura of mystery and romance.

Despite its secluded location off a quiet road, Faasai is very accessible. The beach of **Kung Wiman** is a 10-minute stroll away and the highlights of **Chanthaburi province** are all within an hour's drive.

The sheltered bay of Kung Wiman is noted for its red-tinted golden sands. This hue comes from the big red rocks framing the bay, which also provide a sanctuary for marine life, including various species of fish, prawns, crabs, the occasional turtle and dolphin.

Nature apart, Faasai and its immediate surrounds is a place with an interesting past. Kung Wiman, meaning 'curving water in heaven', was named, a long time ago, by the survivors of a Chinese junk that had run aground on an offshore reef. Grateful to be alive, the survivors, who had swum ashore, decided to call the beach Wiman or 'heaven'. 'Kung' refers to the curving bays all around the shoreline.

Crabs, one of Chanthaburi's seafood specialities



Taksin Hat in Chanthaburi.



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