

WEDDING

FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF
marie claire
AND
InStyle

www.weddingmagazine.co.uk

£4.70 FEBRUARY/MARCH 2009

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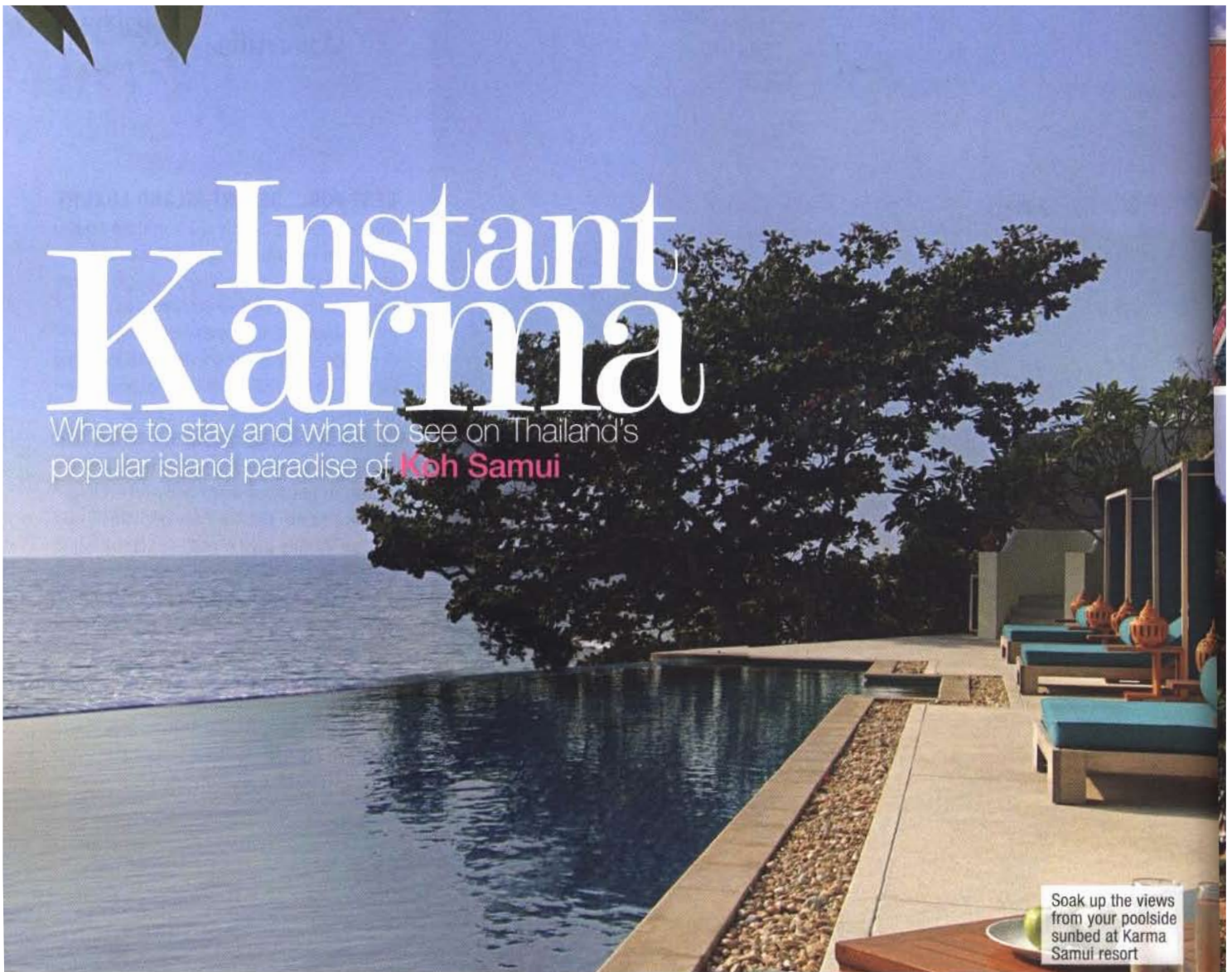
questions
you must
ask your
venue

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Instant Karma

Where to stay and what to see on Thailand's popular island paradise of **Koh Samui**



Soak up the views from your poolside sunbed at Karma Samui resort

If you're planning a honeymoon to Thailand but are unsure of where to go, why not head for the paradise of Koh Samui? Thailand's third largest island continues to be a honeymoon favourite, and there are good reasons why. It could be due to its miles of powder-soft sandy beaches, the incredible seafood on offer or even the buzzing, vibrant nightlife – whatever your preference, there is definitely something here for everyone. And if you're looking to up the romance factor, the peaceful and luxurious Karma Samui resort is a real haven from the excitement of the rest of the island.

LOCATION, LOCATION

Just over an hour's flight from Thailand's capital Bangkok, Koh Samui sits snugly to the east of the country, surrounded by the islands of Koh Phangan and Koh Tao. If you want to add an element of luxury before you even get there, fly business class from Bangkok to Koh Samui with Bangkok Airways – a must if you want to start your honeymoon in style.

SAND, SUN AND SNORKELLING

Apart from the odd rain burst between October and December, the island enjoys year-round balmy weather, with temperatures rarely dropping below 25°C, so you can laze the days away on the beach or go snorkelling in the crystal-clear ocean. Finding a new beach to relax on every day is easy if you hire a 4x4 and hit the 50km loop road, which makes a clear circuit around the island. Every stretch of road gives tantalising glimpses of superb beaches, and leads through sleepy fishing villages and seas of coconut palms.

OUT AND ABOUT

If you can drag yourselves away from the tempting lure of the idyllic shores for a few days, you really should book a tour to the Na Muang waterfall on the southern slopes of the island's central mountains. The upper tier of the falls requires a bit of a trek to reach it, but the lower tier is just as gorgeous, and if you get there before the group tours, you'll be able to swim in the pool beneath without battling the crowds.

Further down the road from the falls is Na Muang Safari Park, which offers elephant rides and the odd snake or monkey show. Admittedly, it is a bit commercialised, but it's worth a look.

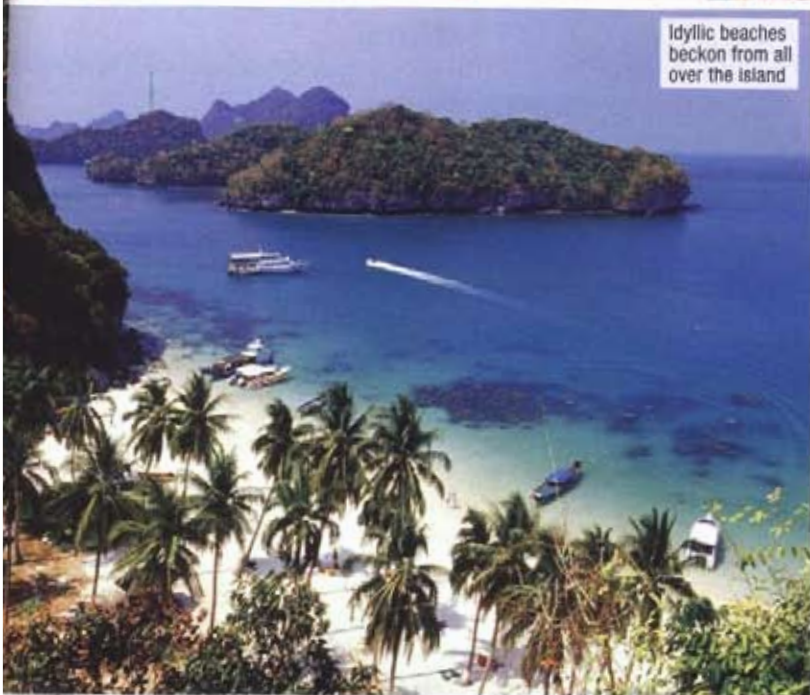
Next, head north for a glimpse of the island's most famous landmark, the totally jaw-dropping, 12m-tall golden buddha at Wat Phra Yai temple. Alternatively, take a boat trip to the Ang Thong Marine National Park, a beautiful archipelago of 42 huge limestone formations covered in virgin rainforest about 20km west of Koh Samui.

SOUVENIRS AND SUNSETS

Shopping and nightlife in Koh Samui are predominantly centred around Chaweng Beach, a 3km strip lined with shops, bars and restaurants. During the day you can shop for traditional Thai artefacts at the local markets or look for bargains among the branded outlets, many of which carry designer products manufactured in Thailand. In the evening, the town comes alive with every form of entertainment, from Thai dancers to contemporary nightclubs.



Explore fascinating cultural sights



Idyllic beaches beckon from all over the island



Each villa at Karma Samui has its own spacious terrace and pool



Karma Samui's chic Thai-style interiors

RELAXING RETREAT

Just five minutes' drive from the buzz of Chaweng Beach you'll find the luxurious and tranquil retreat of the Karma Samui resort. It's a real oasis of calm, and is small enough to feel intimate – with just 36 open-plan pool villas – but with all the five-star amenities of a large-scale hotel. Every villa has a four-poster bed, outdoor shower, fully equipped kitchen, dining and lounge area, plus doors that open onto a courtyard and an open-air daybed pavilion with an infinity pool offering captivating ocean views. The interiors are a cool blend of Thai silk, dark wood and artwork, creating the perfect blend of traditional Thai design and contemporary style.

LOVE IS IN THE AIR

This is a resort built for romance. The hotel boasts two swimming pools, one for families and one aimed towards privacy-seeking couples. Even the resort's dining options have seclusion in mind. Choose between eating exquisite Thai cuisine at the hotel's renowned Padma Restaurant,

or go for all-out indulgence with the in-room dining experience, complete with your own private chef and waiter. And if you want to keep your pampering as private as possible, there's a whole host of spa treatments you can enjoy in the seclusion of your room, courtesy of the Chakra Spa and Wellness centre. The Thai massage is a must, and emotionally exhausted newlyweds in need of intensive relaxation can even have a tailored holistic regime devised for them.

EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME

This idea of choice is one that runs through every aspect of Karma Samui. Guests are offered incredible bespoke experiences that are tailored to their needs or interests; anything from street-food cooking classes and Thai dance shows to trekking and cable rides through the rainforest canopy. However you choose to spend your honeymoon – whether it's doing very little or packing in everything Koh Samui has to offer – you're guaranteed to go home with memories that will last a lifetime. ■

GETTING THERE

Cleveland Collection (0845 450 5732, www.clevelandcollection.co.uk) and www.clevelandspaselection.co.uk offers seven nights in a luxury pool villa at Karma Samui from £1,675 per person, including breakfast, return flights from London Heathrow to Bangkok with EVA Air (www.evaair.com), onward travel to Koh Samui with Bangkok Airways (www.bangkokair.com) and return airport transfers. For more information on Koh Samui and to order a free copy of the new CHIC by Thailand brochure, visit www.tourismthailand.co.uk.

EXCLUSIVE WEDDING OFFER

Book with Cleveland Collection for a minimum seven-night stay in a luxury pool villa at Karma Samui and receive three complimentary spa treatments per person per stay (maximum two guests). Valid for stays between 1 May to 30 June 2009 and 16 September to 19 December 2009 inclusive. Call 0845 450 5732 and quote WED0209KAR.