

# 5 of Asia's Best, Most Unique Beaches You Need To Explore



Sun, Sand, and Sea

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Nothing can beat a beach holiday. Sun, sand, sea and relaxing or enjoying water sports or even exploring unique cultures with family and friends... But where should you go? Here are a few of my favourite locations.

## 1. Boracay, Philippines – thrilling yet relaxing

Located in the Western Visayas, Boracay is just seven kilometres long, and less than a kilometre wide at its narrowest point.

White Beach has 4km of pristine, fine, white sand, turquoise blue water and absolutely spectacular sunsets and is Boracay's pride and joy. Stay at White Beach Station 2 if you like to eat well, shop and party as there are numerous bars, restaurants and shopping malls.



For a change, swim or walk along the beach while checking out the colourful sail boats with their outriggers. I also enjoyed people watching as they rode banana boats, jet skied and parasailed.

At the north end of the beach is Willy's Rock, with its statue of Virgin Mary which draws both devotees and photographers.



On the opposite side of island the coastline is more rugged, the waves bigger and perfect for kite sailing.

Fly from Singapore to Kalibo direct and transfer by land and sea. If you go in January, be sure to catch the Ati-Atihan festival at Kalibo, one of the world's best where tribal folk parade and party.

## 2. Baucau, East Timor – for adventure lovers

Timor Leste is one of the world's newest countries and perfect for the adventurous tourist.

Leaving Dili, we marvelled at the scenery as we passed a huge statue of Christ on the Fatucama Peninsula, dried out rivers, villages selling basketry, wooden houses with thatched roofs, stunning mangroves and the One Dollar Beach, so named because that is what the locals charge tourists to visit it!



*The One Dollar Beach - definitely worth the dollar!*

Our accommodation at Baucau was in simple but comfortable large tents on the beach. Dinner was outstanding fish in banana leaf.



We relaxed on the beach, chatting idly, listening to the sound of waves gently lapping and staring at a sky absolutely filled with bright, shining stars.

After a breakfast of fried bananas, pancakes and honey the “floating fish market” arrived. The villagers rushed to get their supplies as we prepared to head out to sea and explore deserted remote beaches.

Two rocks towered out of the deep blue sea where divers regularly see manta rays, green turtles and black and white tip sharks.

Returning to base, I was enthralled watching fisherman cast their nets in a manner that hasn't changed in hundreds of years.

The Air Timor flight from Singapore to Dili is operated by Silk Air and takes about four hours.

### **3. Bali, Indonesia – Indonesia's most popular island**

I never get tired of visiting Bali. I love the volcanoes, culture, rice terraces and non-stop ceremonies, and of course, its beaches. Kuta Beach is always one of the first places on my itinerary despite it being a little untidy at times.

Early in the morning, the beach is empty except for a few keen joggers, dog walkers and surfers; whereas it can get more packed later in the afternoon. There are always hawkers to provide drinks and snacks and plenty of loungers to rest on.



Walk from Legian Beach through Kuta and Tuban almost to Bali Airport. Tuban Beach is significantly more laid back than Kuta and very photogenic. There is a small fishing community with friendly guys mending nets. In addition, you can get an hour long massage on the beach for the grand sum of 5 Singapore dollars.



#### 4. Koh Samui, Thailand - Sea, Sand, Sun and Fun

Koh Samui is the third largest island in Thailand at 280 square kms. It has a population of 50,000 but welcomes approximately 1 million visitors a year. It has something for all the family with great beaches, night life, culture and lovely food.

Lamai is my favourite beach. At its far end, you don't need a fertile imagination to know why Hin Ta and Hin Yai or grandfather and grandmother rocks are so called! The nearby Beluga boutique Hotel has the best coffee on Samui and a fantastic view.



*The Grandfather Rock*

Lamai is less crowded than Chaweng but still has plenty to do with lots of accommodation, dining facilities and of course massage and bars on the beach.

Consider a full day tour to Koh Nangyuan by Catamaran. The journey is part of the adventure with fine views of fishing boats, rock formations and the deep, clear blue sea. Nangyuan Island Resort is a photographer's paradise with stunning cliffs, umbrellas and deck chairs galore.



## 5. Trivandrum, Kerala India – a beach with a difference

I no longer fish but do like exploring fishing communities.



At Chowara Beach, outside Trivandrum, several groups of men were hauling on ropes extending far out to sea. In a well-choreographed routine, the back marker controlled the team of workers, led the ritual chanting of encouragement and coiled the rope as the heavy fishing net was slowly pulled in. Teamwork at its best!



*Pulling in the nets... and the catch!*

Crows cawed like crazy and egrets waited for any scraps. We were thrilled to see a black kite too.

Carefully flicking the fish to the centre of the net, the incredibly small catch was openly displayed and fiercely auctioned off.

Returning to the beach after lunch, it was interesting to watch the fishermen diligently mending and drying their nets.

Dine at the German Bakery at Lighthouse Beach in Kovalam. The view from the upstairs terrace over the beach is fantastic and the seer fish, calamari, saag paneer and iced cold beer. Delicious!

Fly direct from Singapore to Trivandrum in 4 hours.

*Mike Smith*



British-born Singapore Permanent Resident Mike Smith is a travel writer, blogger and photographer who has had articles published in numerous local and international magazines. He owns [AsiaPhotoStock.com](http://AsiaPhotoStock.com), an online stock photo library, and you can follow his blog at [asiaphotostock.blogspot.sg](http://asiaphotostock.blogspot.sg) where he gives honest opinions about the many places he has traveled to.

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