Relocating to PHUKET?

Free Guide To Visas, Healthcare, Schools and Everyday Life



Phuket to the Face.

Visas & Legal Pathways



Sort your visa before you arrive, not after. This is the mistake we see more than any other. Every year, someone lands on a short-term entry, falls for the island, and tries to scramble a proper visa together from the inside under pressure. Short-term entries are built for tourism. They are not designed to be stretched, extended, or quietly turned into something longer through repeated renewals or border runs.

Thailand's long-stay categories exist for people relocating for real, covering retirement, remote work, marriage, education, and longer-term residency routes. Each comes with its own requirements around income, documentation and timing, and picking the right one takes real research rather than copying what worked for a friend last year, since the rules shift more often than most people expect. Our **guide to moving to Phuket with your family** covers the visa routes most relevant to parents and children specifically.

The families who settle in fastest are the ones who arrange the right visa before committing to a lease or a school place, not after. Getting this order right is one of the highest-leverage decisions in the whole move. Rules shift more often than people expect, so always check current requirements on the official **Thai e-visa portal** before finalising travel plans or signing a lease.

Banking works the same way. Which visa you hold determines whether a Thai bank will open an account for you at all, not just how smoothly the appointment goes. Long-stay visas, retirement, work permit, or dependent status among them, are generally approved. Tourist and short-term entries are usually turned away. Our **guide to opening a bank account in Thailand** walks through what to bring and what to expect. It's another reason the visa comes first: renting a home, setting up daily payments, almost everything else waits on it.

Choosing Where to Live



Where you settle shapes almost everything else: commute, social life, whether the kids can walk to a friend's house, how long it takes before Phuket feels like home rather than an extended holiday.

The north, around Bang Tao, Cherng Talay and Laguna, is where most expat families with children end up. It has the island's highest concentration of international schools, the most established family infrastructure, and a genuine, long-running community. The trade-off is cost. It's the most expensive part of the island to rent in, and the further north you go, the more spread out daily life becomes.

The south, around Rawai, Chalong and Nai Harn, suits a different kind of family. It's quieter, more residential, generally cheaper, and the expat community here tends to be longer-settled. The practical catch is school access. If your children attend one of the larger schools further north, that's real commute time added to every school day.

Schools follow the same logic. Phuket runs several curricula side by side, and which one fits depends on where your child is starting from and how many years remain before graduating. Switching systems partway through is a much harder adjustment than starting in the right one.

None of this is a decision to make from a map or a website. It's worth working through against your children's ages, your budget, and how you actually want the week to look.

Healthcare & Insurance



Healthcare in Phuket runs on private, not public, logic. There's no GP quietly tracking your medical history the way there might be back home, and the free public system isn't really built for expats. Our **full guide to healthcare in Phuket** covers what exists instead: a private system that genuinely surprises most people, fast, English-speaking, and considerably cheaper than equivalent care in the UK, US or Australia, provided the right cover is in place first.

That last part matters. Private hospitals ask for a deposit before they'll treat you, and without insurance, a routine emergency can run into six figures in baht. Whether insurance is a legal requirement depends on your visa category, but in practical terms, arriving without it is a gamble most people come to regret.

One thing that surprises most people arriving from the UK or Europe is how freely available medication is here, common treatments that would need a GP visit back home are often available straight over the counter at a pharmacy. For anything minor, a private clinic is usually the right first call rather than a hospital, faster, cheaper, and considerably less daunting than committing to a full hospital visit for something small.

The decision that matters most is local Thai cover versus international cover, covered in more depth in our **guide to health insurance for expats**. Local plans are considerably cheaper and work well for families settling permanently, while international plans cost more but travel with you and cover more conditions, better suited to families who expect to move again. Vaccination schedules here also differ from the UK, US or Australia, so it's worth confirming your children are up to date before you arrive.

Which providers, which hospitals, and which plan actually fits your situation is exactly the kind of detail worth working through properly rather than guessing from a guide.

Getting Around



Phuket doesn't really run on hailing a taxi off the street, at least not reliably. Almost everyone, tourists and long-term residents alike, ends up defaulting to a small handful of apps within their first week instead.

Grab is the closest thing the island has to a default, covering rides, food delivery and general errands. It's reliable enough that most people keep it even when it isn't the cheapest option going. Bolt is usually a bit cheaper for straightforward rides, though slightly less consistent for availability, so most residents run both side by side and book whichever quotes better. InDrive works differently again, you set the price you're willing to pay and drivers accept or counter, which can work out cheaper than either for those willing to negotiate a little, particularly on longer journeys across the island. Our **full breakdown of taxi apps in Phuket** covers the rest. A Thai banking app matters more than either of them for day-to-day life, since most payments on the island run through QR codes rather than cash or card.

Most people end up buying or renting a car or scooter once they've settled in. Apps cover the early weeks well, but owning your own transport becomes the more practical long-term setup for most families.

None of this takes long to set up, but it's worth doing before you land rather than working it out on day one with jet lag and no data plan.

Daily Life & Getting Outdoors



Phuket life outside of work looks different depending on who you ask, but it usually involves being outdoors more than people expect. A short loop around Nai Harn Lake before breakfast, a climb up to Big Buddha for the view, a quiet afternoon at **Nui Beach** if you know where to look, or a proper **hike through the rainforest** if you want something more ambitious. The island rewards people who actually leave the villa.

For anyone working remotely, the day-to-day looks a bit different again. Villa wifi doesn't always hold up to a client call, so a lot of the island's routine runs through cafés and **coworking spaces** rather than kitchen tables, some built for a single focused day, others set up as a proper base for months at a time.

That's also, quietly, one of the smartest ways to test whether Phuket actually fits before committing to it fully. Spending a real, ordinary week here, working normal hours, doing the school run or the grocery run, seeing how a Tuesday actually feels, tells you more than any amount of research from home.

What Nobody Tells You



A few things the glossy relocation guides tend to leave out.

The school run is a real daily commitment. Many schools don't run buses covering every area, so most parents are driving twice a day, every day. Worth weighing before you commit to a neighbourhood, not after.

Kids adjust faster than parents do. Most settle into their new school and social life within a few weeks. Parents usually take longer, and that's completely normal.

The community is warm, but people come and go. You'll make real friends here, but building relationships with Thai families too gives your children a steadier foundation than the international school circle alone.

The families who struggle are almost always the ones who arrived without a plan. The ones who thrive did the work before they landed.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need to speak Thai to live in Phuket?

No. English is widely spoken across the expat-facing side of the island, from schools and hospitals to most shops and services in the areas expats tend to settle. Picking up some Thai makes daily life smoother and is appreciated, but it isn't a barrier to moving here.

Is Phuket safe for families?

Generally yes. Phuket has a large, established expat family community, and the areas most families settle in are quiet and residential rather than the busier tourist strips. Road safety and swimming safety are the two things genuinely worth being careful about, driving here differs from what most people are used to, and open water needs respect.

How much does it cost to live in Phuket?

This varies more than most guides let on, shaped by your area, your lifestyle, and whether you have children in international school. What holds true across the board is that costs here reward planning far more than guessing, families who go in with a clear number in mind tend to have a smoother landing than those who find out as they go.

Is Phuket only for retirees, or does it suit young families too?

Both, genuinely. Phuket has a strong retiree community, but also a large, active population of expat families with young children, particularly around the international schools. Which part of the island suits you depends more on your family's stage of life than your age.

What's the best time of year to move?

There's no single wrong time, but it's worth knowing the island has a rainy season roughly from May to October, and a drier, busier season from November to April. Many families move around the school year rather than the weather, since enrolment timing tends to matter more day to day than a few extra weeks of rain.

Do I need a car to get around?

For most areas, eventually, yes. Phuket wasn't built with footpaths in mind outside a few pockets, and having your own transport makes daily life, particularly the school run, significantly easier. Taxi apps cover the gap well in the meantime.

What's the biggest mistake people make when relocating here?

Underestimating the admin. Visas, school enrolment, banking and healthcare all run on their own timelines, and the families who struggle are almost always the ones who tried to sort these things out after arriving rather than before.

Can I work remotely from Phuket?

Yes, and the island has a genuinely good setup for it, coworking spaces, fast wifi in most areas. The legal side depends on your visa category though, and that's worth getting right before you commit, not after.

Where To Go From Here

Everything in this guide gets you closer to a real decision, not just a rough idea. The next step, if you want it, is a proper conversation: thirty minutes, no pressure, working through your specific situation rather than general advice.

Book a Free Consultation Call

And if you're already exploring the island, whether you've landed or you're still deciding, our **Things to Do in Phuket with Kids app** is worth a look for the day-to-day stuff, the family-friendly finds worth knowing about while you settle in.

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