

**2011 WHALE SHARK & TURTLE AWARENESS PROGRAM
BLUE GURU DIVING @ GOLDEN BUDDHA BEACH RESORT**

8 NIGHTS PACKAGE INCLUDING:

4 nights at Golden Buddha Resort with:

- Choice of unique Beach Front or Sea View house
- All meals
- Transfers from Phuket to Golden Buddha, Koh Phra Thong
- Transfer from Golden Buddha to liveaboard

4 nights on liveaboard boat in twin or double cabin with:

- All meals, snacks & soft drinks
- 14 dives at Similans, Koh Bon, Koh Tachai & Richelieu Rock
- 4 days dive equipment rental
- Instructor/dive guide
- PADI Whale Shark Awareness specialty certification
- PADI Turtle Awareness specialty certification
- Similans & Surin National Parks entrance & diving fees
- Return transfer to Phuket

PRICE PER PERSON BASED ON DOUBLE OCCUPANCY:

Above 8 night package with:

- Deluxe Sea View House from \$1,395
- Super Deluxe Beach Back House from \$1,425
- Luxury Sea View House from \$1,445
- Super Deluxe Beach Front House from \$1,495
- Luxury Beach Front House from \$1,545
- Premier Luxury Beach Front House from \$1,745

All prices are subject to 10% service + 7% tax

Prices vary based on choice of house – please ask for a personal quotation.

Prices for singles, groups & non-divers also available upon request.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS:

Local diving, snorkeling, kayaking & trips on Koh Phra Thong

Surin Islands day trip from Golden Buddha: 2 dives or snorkeling

Other PADI dive courses, e.g. Open Water, Advanced or a range of Specialties

Nitrox on liveaboard trip

Underwater camera or dive computer rental

Diving insurance (required if not covered by own existing policy)

Massages & spa treatments at Golden Buddha

Extra nights at Golden Buddha

2011 PROGRAM DATES:

13th – 21st February 2011 (13-17 at Golden Buddha; 17-21 on liveaboard)

23rd – 31st March 2011 (23-27 at Golden Buddha; 27-31 on liveaboard)

Subject to demand, there may also be a 3rd trip in April.

Further dates available on request for groups of 4+.

DIVING PRE-REQUISITES:

Our Whale Shark & Turtle Awareness Program is open to everyone, including those without any diver certification...yet!

Anyone without a diver certification can complete the PADI Open Water course with Blue Guru Diving during their 4 day stay at Golden Buddha.

As many dives during the liveaboard trip can be to 30m max depth, the PADI Advanced Open Water certification (or equivalent) is highly recommended for all divers. Those who already have Open Water certification can complete the PADI Advanced Open Water course in just 2 days: 1 day during their stay at Golden Buddha & 1 day on the liveaboard trip or over 2 days on the liveaboard trip.

Non-divers are welcome and can snorkel at many dive sites. However, some offshore dive sites are subject to strong currents, so are not suitable for snorkelers.

All divers will need to:

- complete the standard PADI medical questionnaire to evidence fitness to dive
- have proof of diving insurance (which Blue Guru can arrange for the week if required)

LEARN ABOUT WHALE SHARKS, TURTLES & MUCH MORE!

February - April is prime whale shark season on our doorstep in Thailand's Andaman Sea! During these months we offer a unique experience that supports eco-tourism and marine conservation with the opportunity to learn about, search for & identify migrating whale sharks.

Graceful, rare & mesmerizing, whale sharks can grow up to 12m long (although some 14m sightings have been reported), weigh upwards of 13.6 tonnes & live for 70 years. The most elusive & largest fish in the sea is found in warm tropical waters & it is believed to have originated 60 million years ago. Currently listed as a vulnerable species by The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), whale sharks are frequently targeted by commercial fisheries.

Relatively little is known about this magnificent fish & even less known about their mating habits, migration patterns & actual living population size. Our Whale Shark Awareness Program's objective is to raise awareness about whale sharks & help protect this rare species. In particular, this involves learning how to safely observe any whale sharks spotted whilst photographing them to help identify them & monitor migration paths. Participants will then have the opportunity to submit any photos & data gathered to the ECOCEAN and Shark Trust research databases.

Koh Phra Thong and the nearby Surin Islands are home to 4 types of turtles: Hawksbill, Leatherback, Green & Olive Ridley. During your stay at Golden Buddha, we also offer the opportunity to learn more about turtles, which nest in the long stretch of beach in front of the resort. These species of turtles have survived since the age of dinosaurs and yet sadly numbers are in decline. Participants will learn about the threats turtles face from man & nature and have the opportunity to join a daily early morning walk to monitor the beach for turtle nests. There will also be a visit to a local village where there is a museum run by the turtle project staff.

Want to learn even more about local marine life, coral reefs or aquatic conservation? Blue Guru offers a wide range of marine conservation activities & diving courses that will enable you to get even more satisfaction from your time underwater.

PACKAGE DETAILS

Start your holiday with 4 days luxury of nature at Golden Buddha Resort...

Golden Buddha Beach Resort has long been regarded as one of Asia 's finest eco-resorts. Established 17 years ago, it is the only resort on a spectacular uninhabited 10km beach and private bay on Koh Phra Thong (Golden Buddha Island). The area remains one of the last unspoiled coastal areas in Thailand, so guests can enjoy an experience completely in touch with nature.

Golden Buddha Beach Resort on the Andaman Sea coast comprises uniquely designed beach houses that comfortably sleep between 2 - 5 people. The tropical island resort has only 25 private beach houses, so crowds are non-existent while peace, privacy and tranquility are guaranteed. Both exotic and rare wildlife can often be viewed: hornbills & monkeys are commonly seen. The pristine beach remains one of Thailand's few nesting sites left for leatherback turtles.

On day 1, you will be met by one of Golden Buddha's drivers at Phuket International Airport (or the surrounding area) and transported to Kuraburi by car. From there you will travel onto Kho Phra Thong & Golden Buddha Beach Resort by long-tail boat to begin your 8 night holiday of a lifetime.

All meals are included throughout your stay at Golden Buddha. The food is both delicious & plentiful. Choose any number of dishes from the breakfast & lunch menus, with a good selection of Thai & western foods. At dinner, enjoy a spread of Thai dishes with unlimited refills. Drinks are extra and can be settled in cash or by credit card direct to the resort at the end of your 4 night stay.

You can relax & pamper yourself during your stay by choosing from a range of massages & spa treatments available at a supplement. All massages & spa treatments are delivered in the privacy of your own house by one of Golden Buddha's masseurs. These can be booked on arrival at the resort and paid for in cash or by credit card direct to the resort at the end of your 4 night stay.

... The package includes Whale Shark & Turtle Awareness specialty courses...

Blue Guru will develop your knowledge through the PADI Whale Shark Awareness specialty course. You'll learn about:

- whale shark's biology, distribution & behaviours:
- how to safely & passively interact with them;
- how to help identify specific creatures using their unique spot patterns.

You'll also be given guidance on how to:

- take photos & record data on whale shark sightings
- submit photos & data to the Whale Shark Project, so you can help support whale shark research & protection.

Blue Guru Diving is a registered operator for PADI's Project AWARE Whale Shark Project.

http://www.projectaware.org/english/take_action/whale_shark_project.aspx

In the PADI Turtle Awareness specialty course you'll learn about:

- the role of turtles in the ecosystem
- seven species of sea turtles, their habitats and population statuses
- issues contributing to population decline
- key characteristics of turtles found in the area
- responsible dive and snorkel practices when observing sea turtles
- how you can promote sea turtle conservation

You will also have the opportunity to join the local turtle project staff & volunteers on their daily early morning beach monitoring walks & to visit their museum in the local village.

... During your stay there are plenty of extra activities to enjoy....

As well as offering fun diving & the whole range of PADI courses, Blue Guru also run many other optional extra activities & excursions to keep you occupied whilst staying at Golden Buddha!

For those who want to spend time in or on the water, you can choose from:

- Local diving & snorkeling by shore or by 5 minute boat ride in the bay
- Kayaking through the local mangroves or over the regenerating coral reefs
- Surin Islands diving & snorkeling day trip (subject to minimum numbers)
- Richelieu Rock diving day trip (subject to minimum numbers)

For those who want to explore Koh Phra Thong, you can choose from Blue Guru's local excursions:

- Rainforest trekking on Koh Ra with a visit to Lions Village, built after the Tsunami
- Boat trip round Koh Phra Thong, through mangroves & visiting Tah Pae Yoi, a fishing village
- Village tour to Lions Village & Tah Pae Yoi
- Village tour to Thung Dap, a rural village with orchid farms

You can also take a wide range of PADI dive courses with Blue Guru during your stay....

The PADI Scuba Review is highly recommended for any certified diver who has not dived for a year or more. This 1 day course will:

- review key diving knowledge through independent reading of Scuba Tune Up manual
- refresh key diving skills in confined water
- revive your confidence in an open water dive

The PADI Open Water course takes just 4 days to complete at Golden Buddha resort with Blue Guru, resulting in the most recognized diving certification in the world. The course consists of:

- knowledge development through reading & knowledge reviews
- skills development in safe confined water
- skills practice & underwater tours during 4 open water dives

The PADI Advanced Open Water course takes just 2 days to complete, developing highly valuable skills & knowledge. It's also great fun, consisting of 5 adventure dives:

- Navigation & Deep dives (max 30m)
- Choice of 3 other adventure dives from the list below

PADI Specialty courses combine particularly well with the Whale Shark & Turtle Awareness Program to develop valuable diving skills or build more knowledge about other marine life & conservation, e.g.

- Underwater Naturalist (2 dives)
- Fish Identification (2 dives)
- Peak Performance Buoyancy (2 dives)
- Boat Diver (2 dives)
- Drift Diver (2 dives)
- Digital Underwater Photographer (2 dives)
- Underwater Videographer (3 dives)
- Night Diver (3 dives)
- Underwater Navigation (3 dives)
- Search & Recovery (4 dives)
- Deep (4 dives)
- Project AWARE – aquatic conservation awareness (no dives; open to non-divers too)
- Coral Reef Conservation (no dives; open to non-divers too)

All the above courses can easily be integrated into your diving holiday package, either at the resort or during the dive trip. So you can choose any extra training to suit your interests.

...Continue your experience with 4 days liveboard diving at Similans, Koh Bon, Koh Tachai & Richelieu Rock...

After lunch on the 5th day on your holiday, you will transfer from Golden Buddha Resort to Khao Lak by long tail boat & taxi. There will be a little time for shopping in Khao Lak, if desired.

After boarding the liveboard boat that evening, you'll be given a boat briefing & dinner before setting sail. You will be eating a lot on this liveboard trip: 4 meals a day, snacks & fruit available all day! Juice, water, tea, coffee & hot chocolate are also included & available all day.

Your 4 days on board will also be packed with diving... 14 dives including 3 night dives. You'll visit some of Thailand's top dive sites including Similans, Koh Bon, Koh Tachai and one of the world's top 10 dives sites: Richelieu Rock, famous for whale shark sightings!

Searching for whale sharks is exciting enough but imagine the exhilaration when you actually spot the largest fish in the world: truly awesome!

Turtles are often seen whilst diving throughout Similan & Surin National Parks. You may even spot them during surface intervals on the boat!

As an extra special treat, you may also be lucky enough to dive with manta rays at Koh Bon. Fingers crossed for some manta madness!

Obviously being nature, we can't guarantee any whale shark, turtle, manta ray or other marine life sightings. However you increase your chances by being in the water, especially in this area!!

During the liveboard trip you will be sleeping in a double or twin cabin (subject to preference & availability). The boat can accommodate up to 24 guests in double, twin or 4 person cabins. There are 3 shared bathrooms, each with a toilet, shower & basin. The bathrooms are between the cabins & the dive platform. Dive times are staggered for dive groups, so queues for bathrooms before/after dives are avoided!

The boat has a large dive platform. You will assemble your equipment for the 1st dive and from then on your tank will just be re-filled between dives. Easy! Nitrox fills are available at a supplement. Divers are split into groups of about 4 per divemaster. Dive groups are given different times for kitting up, so there is always plenty of room on the dive deck. There are dunk tanks available on the dive deck to rinse cameras, computers etc. after each dive. Camera & computers are available for rental at a supplement.

Upstairs there is a large, covered dining area where 4 meals a day are served and snacks & soft drinks are always available. Dive briefings are also conducted here. There is also a lounge on this top deck, where you can relax & watch DVDs or read fish identification books.

After lunch on the last day of your holiday, you disembark from the liveboard boat in Khao Lak. From there you'll be transferred back to Phuket airport (or surrounding area).

...Some information on the amazing dive sites in the area...

Water temperature between Feb-Apr is about 29 degrees, so a 3mm wetsuit is sufficient. Visibility is usually about 30m but can be less in plankton-rich waters favoured by whale sharks.

Surin Islands

Located 60km offshore from Kuraburi & just south of the Burmese border, the Surin Islands are one of Thailand's most relaxed & scenic travel destinations. Surin National Park headquarters is based on Koh Surin Nua. The Surin Islands boast fantastic snorkeling & amazing diving, especially around the south of Ko Surin Tai. In the shallows you will find very healthy hard coral reefs teeming with marine life. This is the place to see macro life in full force living in harmony with a large turtle population. Also common around Surin are sightings of manta rays & the occasional sail fish, as well as the possibility of Whale Sharks. You can dive at the Surin Islands on an optional extra day trip with Blue Guru during your stay at Golden Buddha Resort. More info on Surin Islands can be found on our following website page: http://www.kohphrathong.com/koh_surin_islands.html

Richelieu Rock

A world top 10 dive site & the best place in Thailand to spot whale sharks, Richelieu Rock is an isolated pinnacle located 14km east of the Surin Islands, within Surin National Park. Being known for whale shark sightings is not Richelieu's only claim to fame.

Amazement awaits divers in every square meter of the dive site. From colorful soft corals to huge sea fans & sea anemones - the topography here is spectacular. The diversity of small & large marine life is un-matched anywhere else in Thailand & as such it's a favorite location for underwater photographers. Marine life spans from exotic macro life like ghost pipe fish, seahorses, frog fish, harlequin shrimp & nudibranch to cuttlefish, moray eels, octopus, barracuda, giant groupers & manta rays for those looking for possible encounters with larger species.

We will dive here during the liveaboard in search of whale sharks. It may also be possible to do an extra day's diving here with Blue Guru during your stay at Golden Buddha, subject to demand. More info on Richelieu Rock can be found at: http://www.kohphrathong.com/richelieu_rock.html

Koh Tachai

Koh Tachai is also within Surin National Park, 52km south of Ko Surin & 50km west of Koh Phra Thong. The main reef plateau is located approximately 700m south off the island & is completely submerged. The reef offers a plethora of colorful soft, hard & fan corals in combination with rock & boulder formations. Big schools of barracuda & batfish are regular sightings here & from time to time even the gigantic whale shark finds its way to Koh Tachai. Look for camouflage experts like the stonefish! We will dive here during the liveboard trip.

Koh Bon

Koh Bon is an island a few miles north of the Similans, part of Similan National Park. The amazing underwater scenery includes an interesting wall that eventually fades into a long reef stretching down to a maximum depth of 42m. Manta rays are often seen here from Nov-May. You may also be lucky enough to encounter a whale shark feeding in the plankton-rich waters here. Koh Bon is a cleaning station for mantas & whale sharks and you can see them glide slowly past you while the cleaners do their work. The sandy spots at the deeper end are home to blue spotted stingrays, reef sharks and leopard sharks. We will dive here during the liveaboard trip in search of mantas.

Similan Islands

The Similan Islands consist of 9 granite islands 65km off the Andaman coast, providing breathtaking scenery above & below the water. Enormous granite bolder formations form numerous swim throughs, gullies and canyons. The islands are fringed by extensive coral reefs and home to a multitude of tropical fish, with frequent sightings of turtles, rays and sharks. Similan National Park Headquarters is based on Island number 4 and you may have an opportunity to go ashore during your trip to experience the beautiful white sands there.

Koh Phra Thong

The local dive sites on Koh Phra Thong are extremely convenient, accessible from shore or by 3-5 minutes ride on our inflatable dive boat. The maximum depth is only 10m but this doesn't limit the interesting marine life you can spot. At Hornbill Rocks, we have awesome honeycomb whip rays, countless nudibranch and scorpion fish. Living in the regenerating coral reefs around the 2 islands at Koh Pling, there are moray eels, pipefish & lionfish. More info on all our local dive sites can be found at:

http://www.kohphrathong.com/koh_phra_thong_sites.html

http://www.kohphrathong.com/koh_phra_thong_sites2.html

... Want to extend the adventure?...

You can start your trip earlier by booking additional nights at Golden Buddha.

This will enable you to spend more time enjoying the luxury of nature and fit in more days diving with Blue Guru at Koh Phra Thong or Surin Islands!

You can book extra nights at Golden Buddha after the liveaboard trip but this will involve extra transfer time/costs.

...Lastly, a little info about Blue Guru Diving...

The owners are highly professional & experienced PADI instructors. They will flexibly cater for all your diving interests.

Chris has taught & guided dives throughout Thailand & Malaysia for many years. He's therefore well placed to view Richelieu Rock as the best dive site in the region!

Helen, as a PADI Master Instructor, is qualified to teach the whole range of PADI courses, inc. Whale Shark & Turtle Awareness Specialties. She is also a Beautiful Oceans Science Instructor.

Blue Guru is defined by its commitment to environmentalism. Our underlying motivation is to protect the wide biodiversity within the local Andaman Sea through a variety of ways. We believe the most effective way to achieve this goal is through education of our customers & our local Thai community. We encourage our customers to learn more about the aquatic environment because we know from experience that you then get even more enjoyment from your diving & interactions with amazing marine life.

Blue Guru is a registered operator for Project AWARE, Coral Watch & Whale Shark Project.

Please contact us if you would like more info or would like to book this special diving package:

Blue-guru@goldenbuddharesort.com