



## Kata Rocks review: a new breed of luxury in Phuket



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TRAVEL



With a sleek modern vibe and villas styled to look like superyachts, Kata Rocks is setting a course for the future



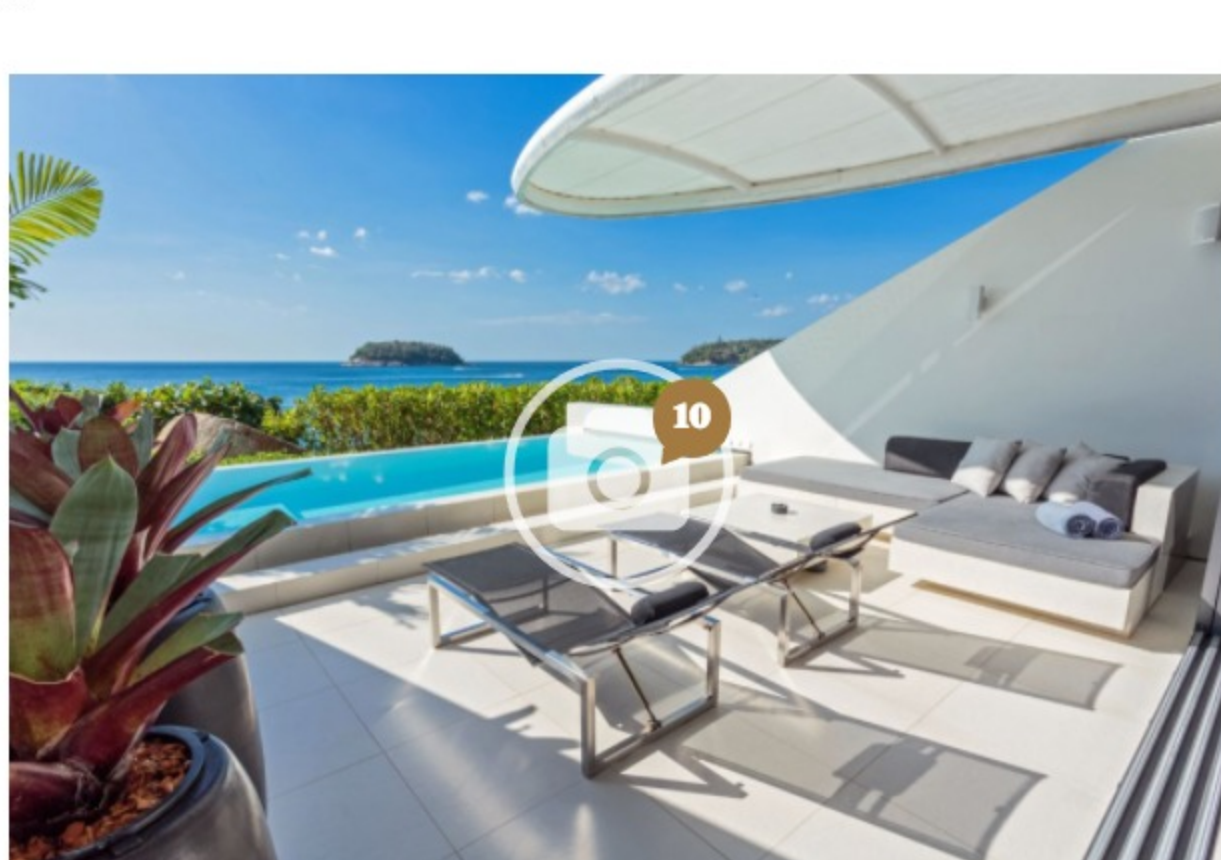
High on a rocky headland overlooking the Andaman Sea, Kata Rocks is a breed apart from most Phuket beach resorts.

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Not only does it offer unparalleled luxury, it does so with none of the faux rustic dark wood and floral drapes that characterise Thailand's more traditional five-star resorts. Styled to evoke the lines of a superyacht, the contemporary villas face west literally as well as figuratively, so you can watch the sun go down from your sleek white pool deck.



Description : Each has its own balcony and private swimming pool

### Why Phuket?

A favourite of tourists for more than three decades, Phuket is the "ideal all-round introduction to Asia", says *The Times*. It's "exotic but comfortable, diverse but easy to explore, wild but welcoming with a distinctive culture and cuisine".

The climate is tropical, the water warm and the coastline among the world's most celebrated: Maya Bay, on nearby Ko Phi Phi Lee, provided the setting for the Leonardo diCaprio film *The Beach*, based on Alex Garden's novel.

All that helps to explain why it attracts about two million visitors per year, says CNN, "including the world's rich and famous, who come for world-class luxury resorts, spectacular diving, island hopping, beach bumming, dining and nightlife".

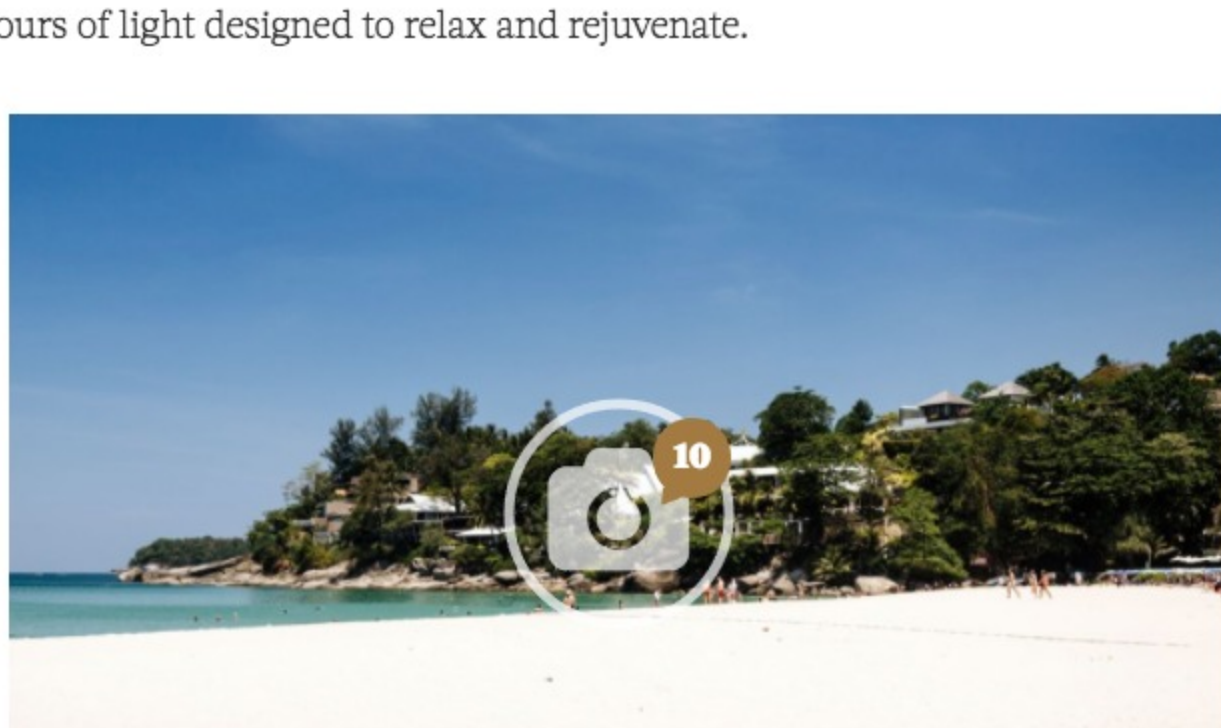
### What to do at Kata Rocks

With a private swimming pool and sun deck in every suite, you could be forgiven for closing the front door behind you and disappearing for the duration of your stay - especially as the rooms are so well kitted out.

A digital music system that syncs your phone with speakers in the lounge and by the pool takes care of entertainment, and there's a generously equipped kitchen for meal times. And fear not: expert assistance is also on hand. A Kata Rocks chef will come to your suite with all the ingredients for a four-course Thai feast, teaching you just how to prepare a chicken coconut soup and yum nua yang, a spicy grilled beef salad with lime dressing, or a selection of other dishes.

If you do venture beyond your front door, head first to the clubhouse, where the bar and restaurant (see below) sit alongside a shimmering infinity pool lined with sun loungers and parasols. Below, dug into the hillside, is the Kata Rocks wine cellar, in which you can enjoy a paired cheese and wine tasting hosted by the sommelier.

One of the chief attractions of Kata Rocks is its high-tech Infinite Luxury Spa, which offers a much broader range of treatments than the typical Thai massage parlour. As well as facials, Thai and kundolini massages, mud wraps and body scrubs, you can book yourself in for a chromotherapy treatment, in which a "floating massage", performed on a warm water bed, is accompanied by different colours of light designed to relax and rejuvenate.



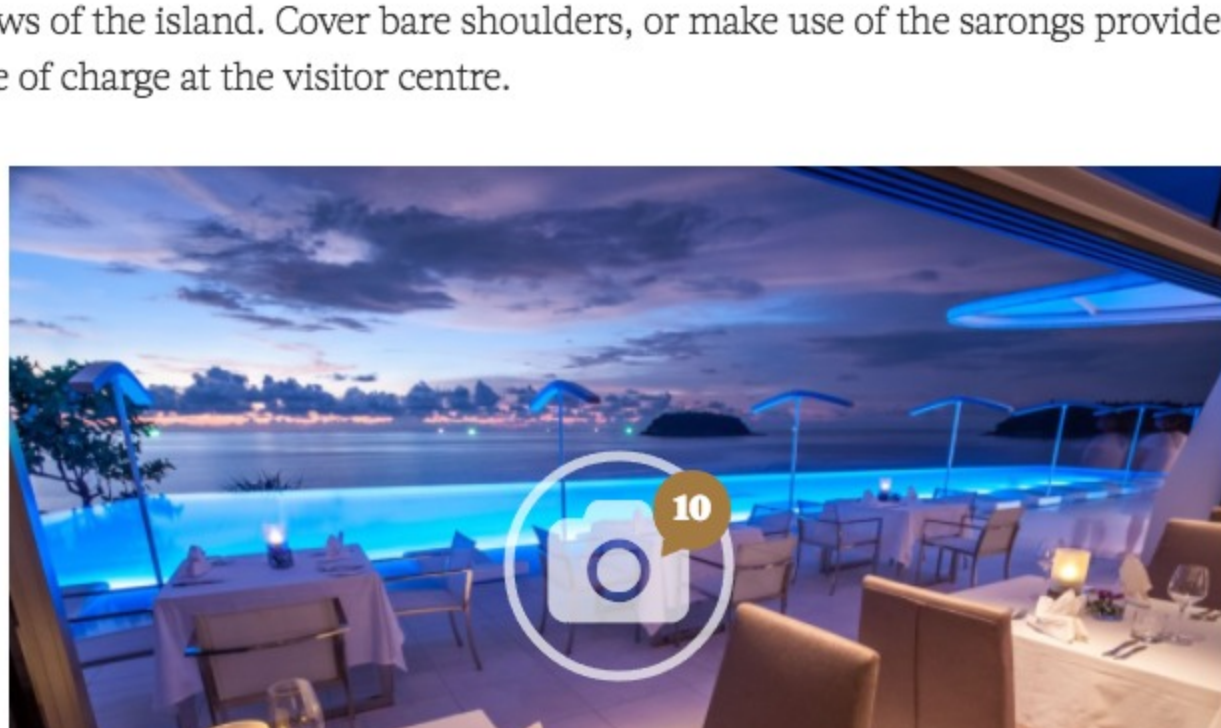
Description : The beautiful Kata Noi beach is a short walk away

### Beyond the resort

Kata Rocks sits between two beaches, the nearest of which, Kata Beach, is directly on its doorstep. It's a vast ribbon of sand, almost a mile long, but it's worth taking the seven-minute walk to Kata Noi. Smaller, prettier and quieter, it has palm trees for shade and, at the northern end, a collection of rock pools ideal for children. The water is crystal clear and seductively warm (usually 28C to 30C).

Further afield, suggests *The Times*, you can "join a kayaking tour in Ao Phang Nga to delve into the sea caves and emerge into a hidden lagoon". Or visit Ko Tapu, otherwise known as James Bond island, which made an appearance in *The Man with the Golden Gun*.

Inland, the marble-clad Big Buddha rises 45 metres from the summit of the Nakkerd Hills, casting a serene eye over the coast - and offering 360-degree views of the island. Cover bare shoulders, or make use of the sarongs provided free of charge at the visitor centre.



Description : The restaurant serves up precisely cooked food in a spectacular setting

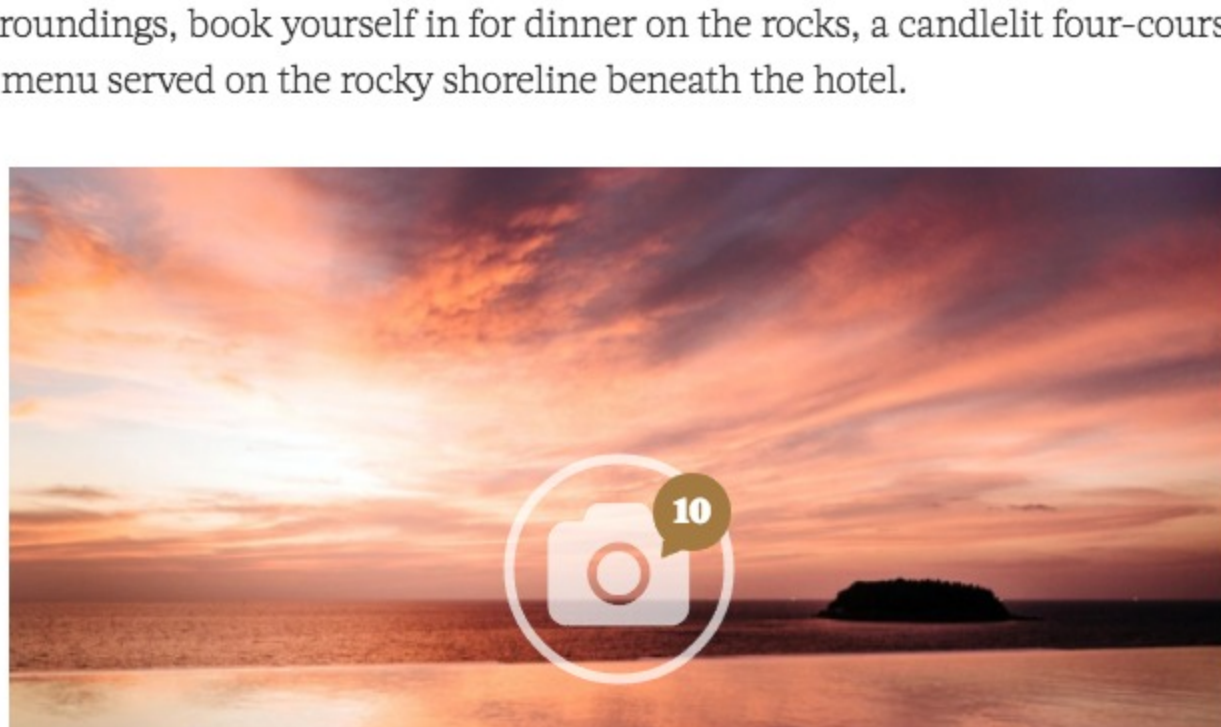
### What to eat

You will certainly not go hungry at Kata Rocks. The poolside restaurant at Executive chef Laia Pons has a total of three Michelin stars under her belt - with easy, confident service.

Even dishes often best avoided in hotels - the steak or burger that may be tempting on the menu and a let down on the plate - are first class here, thanks to succulent Australian wagyu beef and the evident skill in the kitchen.

Fish, prawns and other seafood are equally well served by their bold and simple treatment, especially on the Thai side of the menu. Tom yum goong, the all-conquering hot and sour prawn soup, is particularly invigorating.

For a more extensive tour of Thai food culture, presented in unique surroundings, book yourself in for dinner on the rocks, a candlelit four-course set menu served on the rocky shoreline beneath the hotel.



Description : Sunsets are often spectacular on the west-facing coast

### When to go

Peak season is December to March, when temperatures are cool (relatively - it'll still top 30C) and skies are at their sunniest. Monsoon rains in September and October keep most tourists away (although this is the best time of the year for surfers) and the rest of the year involves a mix of sunny days and (mostly) short, sharp showers.

### How to get there

British Airways flies to Phuket via Bangkok from £615.

### How to book

Prices for a one-bedroom villa start from about £660 per night. For information and booking, visit [www.katarocks.com](http://www.katarocks.com).