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On the rocks

Kata Rocks offers a new level of seaside sophistication in southern Phuket

The latest addition to Phuket's luxury beach club scene opens at Kata Rocks resort in November, perfectly timed to coincide with Asia's most exclusive yachting event, the invitation-only Kata Rocks Superyacht Rendezvous.

Built on a rocky headland between two of Phuket's better beaches - Kata and Kata Noi - around an hour's drive south of the airport, Kata Rocks is only a few minutes' walk from the bustling town of Kata, but floats above the hubbub below like a luxury liner at sea.

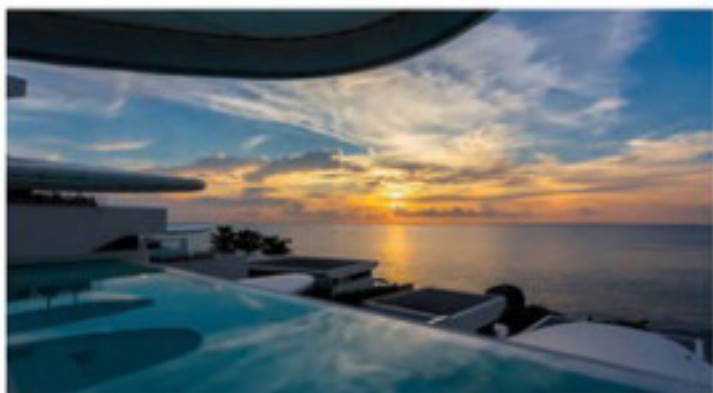
The resort dazzles like the superyachts at anchor in the bay, sleek and white with walls of glass and bow-shaped canopies above wet-edged pools that seem to merge with the Andaman Sea. Villa interiors are white, too, with blond timbers, Italian furnishings and a big eggshell bath overlooking the sea.

It's ideal for those who want to hide away from the world; you could easily stay here for days without leaving the privacy of your villa. All 34 villas have pools and the fully equipped kitchens feature a purpose-built wine fridge that can be stocked with whatever you like; the resort's wine cellar is one of the biggest in Phuket. Each villa's music system seems to have hidden speakers in just about every corner and the four-bedroom penthouses even have their own swim-up bar. Spa pool villas have their own treatment rooms and include daily massages. Thai cooking classes are held in your suite, private yoga sessions can be arranged and if you don't feel like dining out or fixing your own meals, the resort chef will cook for you in your villa.

For those who like to mingle, there's the new dayclub beside another vanishing-edge pool replete with semi-submerged day beds, a poolside restaurant serving a mix of Thai and Mediterranean classics (the breakfast buffet includes champagne on ice, and the Tom Yum Benedict with crispy pork and spicy hollandaise will change the way you think about eggs forever) and a west-facing clubhouse bar perfect for sunset cocktails and tapas. Try the KR gin, distilled in Thailand with lemongrass, basil and wild ginseng. Couples love 'Dining on the Rocks', a romantic candle-lit dinner for two served on a rocky platform below the resort.

There's a kids' club, high-tech fitness room and the Infinite Luxury Spa, which offers traditional Thai massage and bespoke beauty treatments along with chromotherapy treatments that use coloured lights, and hot bamboo massages that are a lot more relaxing than they sound.

A smartphone is preloaded with local restaurant reviews and touring tips, and all calls, including international, are



complimentary. Bespoke touring options range from shopping excursions at the local fish markets, sightseeing trips and walking tours of historic Phuket Town to superyacht charters island-hopping across Phang Nga Bay and exploring sea caves by kayak.

The two-, three- and four-bedroom villas are ideal for families and small groups, but the pick for couples are the ocean loft villas, which are so close to the sea that you can listen to the surf boom and crash on the rocks below as you drift off to sleep.

- LEE ATKINSON

What: Small design-driven oceanfront resort and spa on Phuket's west coast

Where: 186/22, Kok Tanode Road, Kata Beach, Phuket, Thailand

Why: Very private pool villas and fabulous ocean views.
Kata Rocks, katarocks.com (\$1445-\$8020, per villa a night)