



Guests dine by the waves which ebb and flow dramatically over the rugged coastline.



Kata Rocks is an architectural and design triumph.

Romance on the rocks

Kata Rocks offers the ultimate destination dining experience



THE CULINARY DETECTIVE

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As I prepare to leave my Phuket residence, dressing appropriately for dinner at Kata Rocks, my thoughts drift to how fortunate I am to be invited for yet another dinner at a luxury property.

But when one writes about so many restaurants and hotels across Thailand, it is quite rare to be truly surprised – with a few exalted culinary exceptions. Of course, I have previously visited Kata Rocks on a couple of occasions, and whilst it is no doubt an architectural and design triumph, perched on a somewhat unforgiving promontory, a credit to Richard Pope's vision, and I am confident I will have a great evening, I am somewhat unconvinced that I will be experiencing anything magical.

The pool bar and main restaurant on my past visits have always been lively and luxe, reflecting the mission and company nomenclature of “infinite luxury”. The weekend brunches offer a vast array of fresh seafood and quality roast meats combined with the option of dipping one's toes in the tempting infinity pool whilst cutting-edge chill-out lounge beats play in the background. Patrons clearly enjoy their time at Kata Rocks, with happy staff and happy guests casually mixing in a carefree environment. It is indeed an incredibly fun ambience evoking a summer's day extending into early evening on the celebrity-inhabited Côte d'Azur.

But tonight I have been invited to experience ‘dining on the rocks’, yet another unique sunset dining experience which I am assured will also offer my partner and I an injection of the romance which long-married couples regularly require.

As we undertake the relatively short journey, my demeanour remains somber and unconvinced. Upon arriving at the front pavilion, we are efficiently swept into a buggy and make the short trip to the lounge area. Following a short wait to enable us to enjoy the view, we are led along a discreet pathway, with each step ever nearer the sea, and this is when the adventure truly begins. Following a short walk, our waiter guides us tentatively onto the rocks themselves. We move with trepidation and are ultimately rewarded with our table for dinner, immaculately set, quite literally just a few steps away from the waves which ebb and flow dramatically over the rugged coastline.

Those of you who after reading this article immediately reserve a table, I suggest you arrive in time for sunset; I can think of few more breathtaking locations from which to enjoy such a stunning vista. Our table has been dressed with many thoughtful details, but I will not spoil the surprise for those of you inclined. Suffice to say, the scene is beautifully staged.



Foie gras terrine.



Grilled wagyu beef tenderloin.

Both Thai- and Western-themed set menus are offered and, to aid the kitchen, should be ordered in advance. We have chosen Western, and with Executive Chef Laia Pons, a Spanish culinary talent with a star-studded resume, at the helm, expectations are high. Remember for a moment the logistical challenges our location presents and one would certainly expect that delivering top-class cuisine and picture-perfect plates at the required temperature may not be particularly easy to achieve. But I am delighted to inform you that remarkably they do.

We begin with a signature crab salad; carefully crafted quenelles of juicy, tender crab meat, light, refreshing and very moreish. We follow with an unctuous slice of foie gras *au torchon*, the liver quite literally wrapped in a cloth before a delicate poaching to ensure the decadent fat remains to maximise flavour, accompanied with crunchy hazelnuts and fresh figs – a memorable dish. Our main courses follow: a slow-cooked salmon, just *cuit*, the flesh still pink, and an equally perfectly prepared and presented wagyu tenderloin that melts in the mouth.

We choose to end with a traditional chocolate lava cake made with France's finest and a uniquely presented banoffee dessert, both which exceed expectations.

Dining outdoors is not always the preferred choice, especially with the evidently unpredictable current climate; however, with a gentle breeze wafting in from the ocean, it was really quite pleasant.

As we depart from the ocean edge, hands held, perhaps more for stability rather than romance, I can confidently say that dining on the rocks is, for me, a wonderfully unique experience, distinctive, special and exclusive. My earlier prediction could not be further from the reality.

We are continually informed that the world's travellers are seeking ever more unusual and memorable experiences and I cannot help but feel that this recipe of slightly Mediterranean and stylish plates served up on this intimate, quite edgy headland venue is a strong contender for a must-do, up there with the best. For me, it was definitely a well-kept secret. Well, following this article, I hazard a guess, probably no more! Book a dinner on the rocks and head to KR at your earliest.

The ‘dining on the rocks’ experience operates on a seasonal basis and is subject to weather conditions. For more information or reservations, email dining@katarocks.com or call (66) 076 370777. www.katarocks.com

Chris is a former Michelin Guide Inspector who, following an international career in hospitality spanning 30 years in both the Middle East and Asia, has now settled in Thailand and contributes a monthly restaurant column.

