



Andaman Islands



Floating in splendid isolation some 400 nautical miles north-west from Phuket in the Andaman Sea is this archipelago of over 500 islands, islets, rocks and reefs. They stretch out over a length of 430 miles and are an unparalleled destination for nature lovers and divers alike. The climate is somewhat cooler than Thailand or Burma, seabreezes further reduce the temperature. You may actually find a need for a jacket in the mornings.

The aboriginal peoples on the Andaman and Nicobar islands are of Negroid and Mongoloid stocks. The main tribes are the Onge, Andamanese, Shompen, Nicobarese and Jarawa Sentinelese. Above water the islands are a veritable Garden of Eden and a naturalists haven. The rainforests are a habitat to a vast number of plant-, bird-, and animal species, many of them unique in the world. The canopied forests themselves have an amazing variety of timbers, foliage and blooms. The Andaman Paduk, the Yellow Hibiscus, the White Lily, the Pandanus as well as many varieties of Orchids are but a few of the over 700 species of plants to be found. Flocks of parrots, Bahminy kites, hornbills, sea eagles, and herons will delight the birdwatcher. Around sunrise one can often sight spotted deer along the shores.

Another unusual sight is the swimming elephants. After a day's work the mahouts (elephant trainers) take their pachyderms for a refreshing swim. The elephants can actually swim under water using their trunks as a snorkel!



Weather: The "High" season during the northeast monsoon from November - March is the best time to sail to the Andamans. The weather is usually settled by mid/late December, early in the season you may encounter some stormy conditions. January and February are the most settled months. By about the third week in March a southerly ground swell starts to kick in, heralding the onset of the southwest monsoon.

On the east coast you will typically encounter northeast or northerly winds.

There are some fairly strong land- and sea-breeze effects, so you may often experience northwest breezes in the afternoon especially on the west coasts, or further south.

The climate here is lovely! Being further north, it's much cooler than Phuket at night, but still lovely and warm in the day time. (The range is usually between 22°C and 33°C.)

Fuel/Water

You can arrange with Port Control on VHF Ch. 16 to go to Hope Wharf (north of Chatham Is.) to take on fuel and water. However, most yachties tend to fill jerry





cans at fuel stations or get their agent (or someone like Ravi, see 'Contacts' below) to get the cans filled. Likewise you can buy drinking water in large 25 litre bottles (60R plus deposit each) which can be brought to the dinghy dock for you to fill your tanks before returning the bottles.

Money

There are now several touch-screen ATMs at the banks in Aberdeen, Port Blair. Otherwise you can still change money or cash travellers' cheques in most large banks and hotels.

Shopping/Provisioning

The main shopping centre in Port Blair is Aberdeen Bazaar. Along this road you'll find all kinds of shops. The clock tower at the top of the hill is a well-known landmark in navigating around town. Turn right here and you'll find the C&C Co-op store (- almost a supermarket) great for dried goods, spices and curry mixes. The market is at the bottom of the hill opposite the bus station, and you can buy a good range of fruits and veggies here. Take the left fork out of the market and you'll get to Pioneer Chicken. (This is not a great place for vegetarians!) Due to a lack of homes with fridges, most Andaman chickens are killed and dressed to order. You can get frozen chicken here too, but the live ones are usually better.

Close to the Chatham anchorage, you can also get fruits and veggies from the causeway on Chatham itself, or just up the hill towards Haddo. (Haddo also has a Pioneer Chicken & C&C Co-op if you don't want to go all the way to Aberdeen.)

If you want to shop for clothes or other items, there are also lots of good shops in the Junglighat area of Port Blair.

Many shops and restaurants are closed during the heat of the day, so shop before 11 a.m. or after 5 p.m.

Restaurants in Port Blair

Temptation: Superlative Indian cuisine for dinner (but still cheap.)

Gem Continental: Good tandoori and all the classics, air con or outdoor.

The Lighthouse: Good tandoori, but open air dining can be smelly.

New India Café at hotel Jai Mathi: Traditional Indian lunch spot. (Check re: licensing laws. E.g. no alcohol in New India Café but has locals bar next door, some unlicensed restaurants will let you BYO or buy-in from next door bar.)

Communications

Internet: More and more internet cafés are opening in Port Blair.

Phone: It's possible to buy an Indian SIM card for your mobile phone; go up Aberdeen Bazaar, turn right at the clock tower and look for the air-conditioned phone shop.

Contacts:

Emotion travel (Indian Visas)
104, Rasada Road, Phuket Town
emotiontravel@hotmail.com

Tel. (076) 222 320

Fax (076) 222 420

(From abroad dial +91 3192 before the phone/fax numbers below)

Harbour Master: Capt. Mukherjee
hmpmb@and.nic.in

Tel. 232 834 / 233 674

Fax 237 804 / 236 069

Immigration: Tel/Fax: 233 307

Customs: Tel/Fax: 233 698

Coast Guard: Tel. 232 584 Fax 240 845

Forest Department: Tel. 233 549





(For permission to visit Cinque Islands etc.)

Agents:

Island Travels

islandtravels@yahoo.com

Tel. 233358 Fax 230109

T.S.G. Tour Wings

tsgtour@hotmail.com

Tel. 231894 Fax 242799

Andaman Is. Yacht Service Co.

joy-yacht@yahoo.com

Tel. 239398 Fax 239246

Not an agent, rather a taxi-driver-come-entrepreneur,

Ravi is the man who gets things done at Chatham.

He can organise water, fuel, boat parts, just about

anything, all for a good price. Let him know you're

coming, or simply meet him on the dinghy dock:

P N Ravi

nagoorravi@yahoo.com

Mobile: 943 426 2030

Dive Operators:

Port Blair Underwater: Tel. 285 389

Andaman and Nicobar Scuba Diving Society

Tel. 232881

Andaman Adventure Sports: Tel. 230 295

Useful websites:

www.and.nic.in : general information about Andamans
and Nicobars

www.weather.nic.in : weather

www.tmd.go.th : Thai met office, for weather covering
Andaman Sea

