



One **Princess**, Two **Achievements** and Five **Gold Stars**

Sareeraya Villas and Suites' fantastic location, cosy interior design and hospitable staff have earned the resort five-star recognition.

When we take time off work with the aim to unwind and recharge, every minute of our getaway becomes extra precious. In that limited time span, there are the guidebook tips that we must follow, and the unpremeditated paths that are waiting to be trail-blazed. On Samui, paying pilgrimage to Chaweng's nightlife is as much a prerequisite as zoning out on the pristine sandy beach. But of course there are also the coconut tree-lined south, the tranquil north and the antique west that are waiting to be discovered. This diversity is exactly the charm of Samui – a multi-faceted island where peace, madness, modernity and nature coexist harmoniously.

Some of us may lavish Samui with more time, but if you are only here for a short period then choosing a base camp in a good location becomes paramount for maximising the Samui experience. Ask a local which part of the island borders heaven and earth, and the answer will most likely be the Chaweng area. If it is the perfect blend of nature nurture that you are looking to enjoy with your friends, partner or family, then look no further than a stay at Sareeraya Villas & Suites - a boutique resort perched right at the northern end of Chaweng. This location offers you the tranquil part of the beach where the sand is talcum powder soft but without distractions from beach hawkers. You are in the heart of the island, but appreciably distanced from the pumping aorta, so that you don't feel the constant thrust of those full-on party pulses. In fact, a mere 10-minute walk will take you right to the bars and the restaurants in the middle of Chaweng.

Sareeraya means "Princess of the River", and indeed this boutique hotel exudes exotic Oriental femininity everywhere you look. The rich greens that embrace the surrounds of the hotel are reminiscent of the luscious touch of a woman, and the decorations from the wall art to the water features are fluid and soft. The white sandy beach is immaculately combed by the staff, who are also happy to bring food and drinks to wherever you choose to relax on the premises. Are you getting an elevated view of the Chaweng bay on the gazebo on top of the wet bar? Are you soaking up the sun on the loungers? Are you sitting in the

Sareeraya means "Princess of the River", and indeed this boutique hotel exudes exotic Oriental femininity everywhere you look.

wet bar in the pool? Or are you too lazy to get out of your villa's outdoor Jacuzzi? Wherever you are, the staff are happy to cater to your every request.

And it is exactly because of Sareeraya's cosy décor and accommodating staff that Thailand's Ministry of Tourism and Sports decided to award the boutique hotel a coveted five-star resort standard this year. Introduced only a couple of years ago, the Ministry's scheme has only seen a few certificates presented to premises on Samui; and Sareeraya is one of the first resorts on the island to receive this honour.

The resort boasts 49 units, 36 of which are suites and 13 are villas. Each of Sareeraya's room is equipped with either an outdoor Jacuzzi, a plunge pool or offers direct access to a private-communal pool shared only with six units on the ground floor.

Photos of Sareeraya speak volumes about the hotel's palpable allure. But throw in the hotel's software and you will fully understand why the Ministry was charmed by Sareeraya. The minute you enter the hotel through its entrance on Chaweng Beach Road, the staff beam a tropical smile and take you to the concierge, who then cheerfully offers to take your bags. Once you sit down in the check-in area, the staff then loop an orchid necklace around your neck and present you a cold towel and a welcome drink to cool down after a long journey. Another plus point goes out to the staffers who speak very good English. In the words of Sareeraya's general manager, Pius Luechinger: "When I go through the hiring process, I rarely look at people's education background. I employ people based on how good their English is, how friendly and service minded they are. Communication and niceness are two of the most important things in the hospitality business."

Sareeraya's guests certainly share Mr Luechinger's sentiment. Log on to Sareeraya's TripAdvisor page

and take a look at the glowing feedback. Most of the guests praise the pleasant and helpful staff. Indeed, on top of the five-star resort status that was awarded to the resort earlier this year, TripAdvisor also recently presented a certificate of excellence to the hotel. Sareeraya may only be four years old, but its achievements are obvious.

Top Sareeraya's immaculate surrounds and wonderful staff with a wealth of world-class facilities such as an in-house spa and a well-equipped gym (both located conveniently across the road) and you have the recipe for a bona fide five-star resort.

Kawai Wong

For reservations or further information, telephone 0 7791 4333 www.sareeraya.com