

VIEW TO A THRILL

An exciting helicopter ride with HeliThai will leave you with a lasting impression of the panoramic wonders of Phuket.

WORDS: **Bobbie Lee**

When you want to enjoy the scenic beauty of an island like Phuket, there's really no better way than from above. Imagine soaring from 500 to 1,500 feet up in the air and enjoying a stunning aerial view of the island's lush greenery, cerulean waters and sandy beaches. While the idyllic island is already memorable on land, the much-lauded beauty of Phuket becomes truly unforgettable from an aerial perspective. Since 2005, HeliThai has been offering visitors this unique way to enjoy the island's picturesque qualities from the air-conditioned comfort and safety of

quality helicopters that it has access to. Guaranteed window seats mean no obstruction while you experience coasting the blue skies and soaking in the brilliance of Phuket. For added excitement, you can request for the doors-off option which will truly give you a bird's eye view of the scenery and the opportunity to take quality photographs.

PICTURE PERFECT

HeliThai's array of interesting services range from aerial reconnaissance to charter flights, flight-seeing tours, aerial photography, filming and even sky-high wedding proposals.

For up to 3 passengers per journey on the Robinson R 44 Raven II, you can opt for a quick 10 to 12-minute joy

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ride (THB 3,500 per person) which takes you up and above the bay so you get to appreciate the aerial view of the area.

For those who want to enjoy the beaches of Phuket from above, Magical Bays of Phuket offers you views of Karon, Kata, Nai Harn and other stretches of sandy beaches and resorts over a 25 to 30-minute journey (THB 7,900 per person). You will also get to marvel at the magnificence of the Big Buddha which stands at 45 metres in height and 400 metres above sea level.

The Phang Nga Bay Flight Seeing ride (45 to 50 minutes, THB 12,500) takes you over a pretty kaleidoscope of fishing boats, shrimp farms and mangroves before delving into the captivating scenery of Phang Nga Bay with its towering sea cliffs and emerald waters. You will also get a peek at the fishing village nestled in the middle of this beautiful landscape and the famous James Bond island.



CRUISING AT 180 TO 200KM/H AND TRAVELING AT A MAXIMUM SPEED OF 240KM/H, THESE HELICOPTER JOURNEYS WILL GIVE YOU ENOUGH TIME TO ENJOY THE SCENERY WHILE ENSURING A HEALTHY DOSE OF THRILL.



If you choose to catch the wonders of Koh Phi Phi (45 to 50 minutes, THB 12,500), you'll enjoy gorgeous views of sandy stretches of beach, golf courses, lush jungles, natural small islands and the Big Buddha as you are taken on an exciting ride towards the island.

The tour flights leave from either Sea Pearl Villa in Patong or Boat Lagoon Marina, and a minimum of three hours notice is needed for a booking. Arrangements can also be made if you want to catch the sunset while on the ride. At no extra charge, the helicopters can take off for the flight seeing tours before sunset and return just around sunset.

Cruising at 180 to 200km/h and traveling at a maximum speed of 240km/h, these helicopter journeys will give you enough time to enjoy the scenery while ensuring a healthy dose of thrill. Most importantly, the amazing aerial views of Phuket will leave you with lasting memories of the beautiful island.

THE EXTRA SPECIAL

Romance is literally in the air when HeliThai caters to special requests such as wedding proposals. The message “Marry Me” is written in the sand at Nai Yang beach and the helicopter that takes the couple up for a regular sight-seeing tour would fly over the words just before landing. This romantic gesture would cost just THB 3,000 on top of the cost of the tour ride.

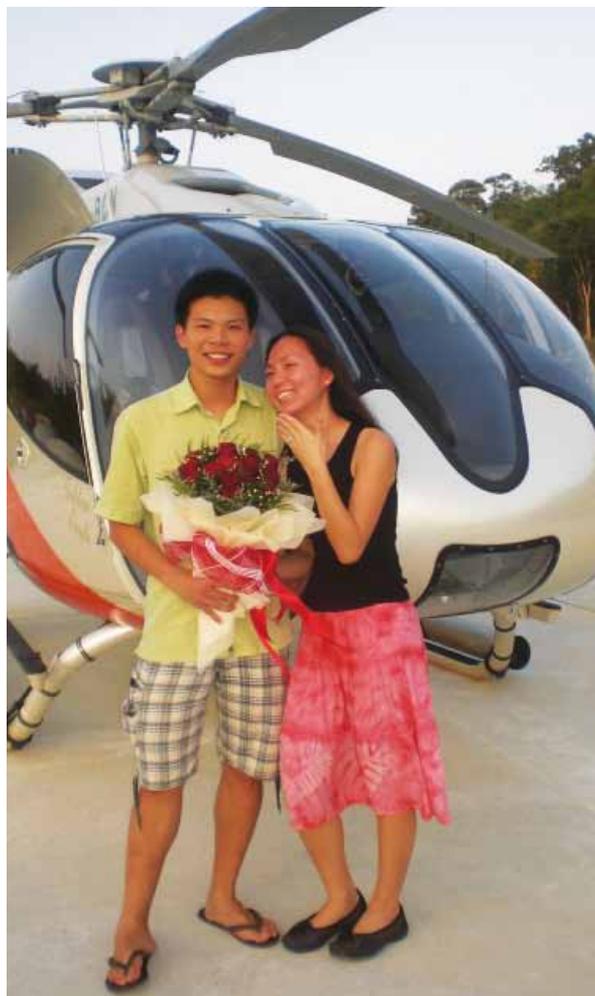
Other special arrangements can also be made. Most recently, an Australian gentleman who wanted to propose to his girlfriend requested for a sunset flight. When the couple boarded the flight, music that he had provided was played in the headsets for the journey and the helicopter landed at the Sri Panwa hotel where he had organised a romantic dinner. As soon as they landed, he proposed and this wonderful surprise was of course, met with an ecstatic response.

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Flights have also been chartered to ferry passengers to neighbouring islands. A helicopter was recently booked by four young party-goers to take them to Koh Phangan for the Full Moon Party. It waited the night for them and returned with a slightly more dehydrated group the next day. This little expedition cost the party around USD\$6,000.

Customised flight arrangements can be made with HeliThai to your preference. The company is willing to accede to requests within their abilities and as long as safety isn't compromised. A minimum of three hours notice is needed for a booking and the company can cater to flight requests anywhere within their range limit before refueling.

Clients will have to depart from where the helicopter is located. However, they can request for a re-positioning of the aircraft to another location, at an additional cost. Landing fees would apply at THB 3,000 per landing. Daily rental can also be organised, with a minimum of two hours, whether or not the helicopter is eventually used.





On top of offering scenic journeys and aerial thrills, HeliThai is also involved in providing services for the filmmaking business. The company's helicopters have been used for aerial filming for a variety of international movies and major Hollywood productions such as *Bourne Legacy*, *The Hangover - Part 2*, *Temptation Island*, *Fantastic Four: The Rise of the Silver Surfer*, and *Home*. Equipped with quality equipment and reliable contacts, the company provides consultancy for aerial filming in the Phuket Province and Southeast Asia. It also handles all the Thai license and permit arrangements for mega yachts that have private helicopters on board.

SAFETY FIRST

Flying can be unnerving for some, but, with HeliThai, you're assured as all the safety measures have been covered. The company is the only VIP helicopter charter service in Thailand to have access to a fleet of reliable and quality helicopters such as the brand new single engine EC130B4 (which takes up to 6 passengers) from Eurocopter and the Robinson R 44 Raven II. Eurocopter is the sister company to Airbus who owns the largest market share of 52% of helicopters in the commercial sector.

Highly experienced captains with over 20 to 30 years of experience and with up to 5,000 to 7,500 flight hours manage the fleet. In fact, the company's brand new Robinson R 44 is flown by a fully qualified German

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pilot with over a thousand hours of flying. On hand to assist and supervise the HeliThai operations if required is a former Eurocopter Chief Pilot Instructor with over 10,000 flight hours.

Safety is emphasised and the company complies strictly to the safety requirements with ICAO and Department of Civil Aviation in Thailand. Professional maintenance of the helicopters are carried out from the manufacturers' maintenance teams and daily maintenance checks are also implemented by a trained team.

With assurance of the company's experience and stringent standards, you can be sure that your HeliThai journey will be comfortable, safe and always fun. ✪

 Boat Lagoon Marina
www.helithaiandassociates.com