

Published based on [PhuketS Amazing Vegetarian Festival 2012](#)

# **PhuketS Amazing Vegetarian Festival 2012**

Phuket plays host to many festivals and celebrations - both national and international - annually, but the Phuket Vegetarian Festival is arguably the most fascinating, curious, cultural, and delicious of them all.

Held over a nine-day period in September or October, this festival celebrates the Chinese community's belief that abstinence from meat, sex, alcohol, and other vices during the ninth lunar month of the Chinese calendar will help them attain good health and enjoy a tranquil peace of mind. The 2012 PVF takes place between the 15th and the 23rd of October.

Though the origins of the festival are unclear, it is believed that the festival was begun in Phuket after a wandering Chinese opera troupe fell ill with malaria while performing on the island. The troupe then kept to a strict vegetarian diet and performed various rituals to two of their emperor gods.

They were soon healed, greatly impressing the local population, who embraced the faith, the ceremonies, and the rituals, which have become increasingly popular over the years. The Vegetarian Festival, called Prapheni Kin Jay or Prapheni Kin Phak in Thai (The Festival for Eating Vegetables), is now one of the major annual events on the Chinese - and the Phuket - calendar.

With its sometimes shocking mix of the gory and the gourmand, the shocking and the salivacious, this is a classic Thai-style festival. Thousands of people converge on the island every year for the festivities, not only to witness the piercing and self-mortification, but to join in a time of cleansing, purity, and abstinence from all vices, or at least any given individual's chosen vice they decide to give up for a time.

It is no exaggeration to say that you will see believers piercing and puncturing their cheeks with virtually any object imaginable: knives, swords, spikes, machetes, axes, silverware, and the odd rubber snake - and those are just the small things.

Grab your camera, walk around, and you'll see such sights as people sticking shovels through their cheeks, as well as revolvers, machine guns, maybe the odd gas pump nozzle or perchance a miniature battleship. Umbrellas are popular piercing items, it seems, as are the stalks of pineapples and bananas, fruit still attached.

The local ethnic Chinese population, about one-third of Phuket residents, believes that these sacred rituals will draw the evil away from the community and onto themselves, thus bestowing good luck and fortune to those who religiously and enthusiastically participate in these practices.

Adherents are enjoined to follow the "ten commitments," which include: abstaining from meat, sex, alcohol, and tobacco; wearing white; behaving properly both mentally and physically; and keeping the body clean and pure throughout the festival. (See the website below for further details and festival etiquette.)

The "ma song" (entranced horses), as the active participants are called, claim to feel no pain and bleed little despite what they are inflicting upon their flesh. They are truly in a state of religious ecstasy, and the evil spirits are said to observe this and are then frightened away.

People in mourning, and pregnant and menstruating women are proscribed from attending or participating in the events, as is typical of many traditional rituals and ceremonies throughout the world.

The main temple for the event is the Jui Tui Shrine, located near the Fresh Market in Phuket Town, although it is now held in areas around the six Chinese temples on Phuket Island. Visitors who want to get the most out of this event should visit the five oldest shrines in Phuket: Put Jaw, Jui Tui, Bang Niew, Cherng Talay, and Kathu Shrine.

The list is a guide to which shrines one might choose visit on which days, when these shrines play host to larger ceremonies and more activities.

Wednesday, October 17 Sapam Shrine

Thursday, October 18 Samkong Shrine  
Friday, October 19 Baan Tha Rue Shrine  
Saturday, October 20 Bang Neow Shrine & Cherng Thalay Shrine  
Sunday, October 21 Jui Tui Shrine  
Monday, October 22 Kathu Shrine & Yok Ke Keng Shrine  
Tuesday, October 23 Sui Boon Tong Shrine

The TAT prepares an excellent brochure each year with a schedule of events you would be well-advised to consult.

There is also important advice on behavior and dress, which should of course always be observed, such as wearing white, and maintaining exceptional personal cleanliness. The festival is in essence a time of renewal, rejuvenation, and the refreshing of one's mind and body.

For more information on dates and events, please visit <http://www.phuketvegetarian.com>

<http://goarticles.com/article/PhuketS-Amazing-Vegetarian-Festival-2012/6970932/>

You can also find this article published on [PhuketS Amazing Vegetarian Festival 2012](#), and on the tag pages [Bang Niew](#), [Cherng Talay](#), [Jui Tui](#), [Kathu Shrine](#).