

TRAVEL

# I Was a Four Seasons Virgin

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The great retox – Caroline Phillips takes to burgers and cigars in an attempt to overcome a detox. Welcome to the Four Seasons, Koh Samui, Thailand – a resort that deserves a squillion stars (and stripes).

After just a day off booze or cigarettes – or even after a serious detox – there can be few better places for a retox than the Four Seasons in Koh Samui, Thailand. It's a luxury resort that deserves a squillion stars (and stripes.) They offer torpedo-sized cigars, burgers so big and fresh that they almost moo, and chips to love more than life itself. And the place is full of Eastern promise and Asiatic charm with an American twist – a perfect retox ambience.

Koh Samui lies in the Gulf of Thailand, the principal island in an archipelago of 48 islands. The 4S (as the Four Seasons is known to aficionados) is set amid lush tropical rain forest and beside a whiter-than-cocaine beach overlooking the distant islands of the gulf. The weather is hot and perfect for tanning, as it should be for a good retox.

Staff deliver chilled towels, Coca-Cola floats and cocktails to a supine me on the private beach; so there's little reason even to walk the 50 steps from my recliner to the ocean's edge. When I tire of lolling there's an opportunity to have a Minor Affair for the day (such is the name of the resort's vroomiest of high performance speed boats with a sound system, DVD and TV). Otherwise I can splash around with kayaks and stand-up paddle boards – not too much exercise, mind. That would smack of healthy living.

After all, I'm at the resort purely to overcome any vestiges of my Kamalaya detox (see Lusso article, 'OM, OM...OMG'). I'm here to try to raise my toxin levels to those of the average McDonald's quaffing, midwestern American; and to do my best to pile on the pounds until I can go up two sizes and make a British size 16 dress look figure-hugging. Except, let's face it, I am as unlikely to manage this as I am to live on air and juice on a serious detox. But I can dream.



Fortunately the resort is close to Chaweng – which is renowned among international fun-makers as 'party central'. Forget Ibiza – so last millennium. The Chaweng discos throb with techno, rave, house and ambient DJ music – and there's particularly feverish party activity on full moon nights. Starz Club gets top billing; it's where party-goers sip Lusty Ladies and get into the *Cage aux Folles* spirit as the silver lamé curtain rises on the cabaret...and the *kathoeyes* ('ladyboys') strut their stuff.

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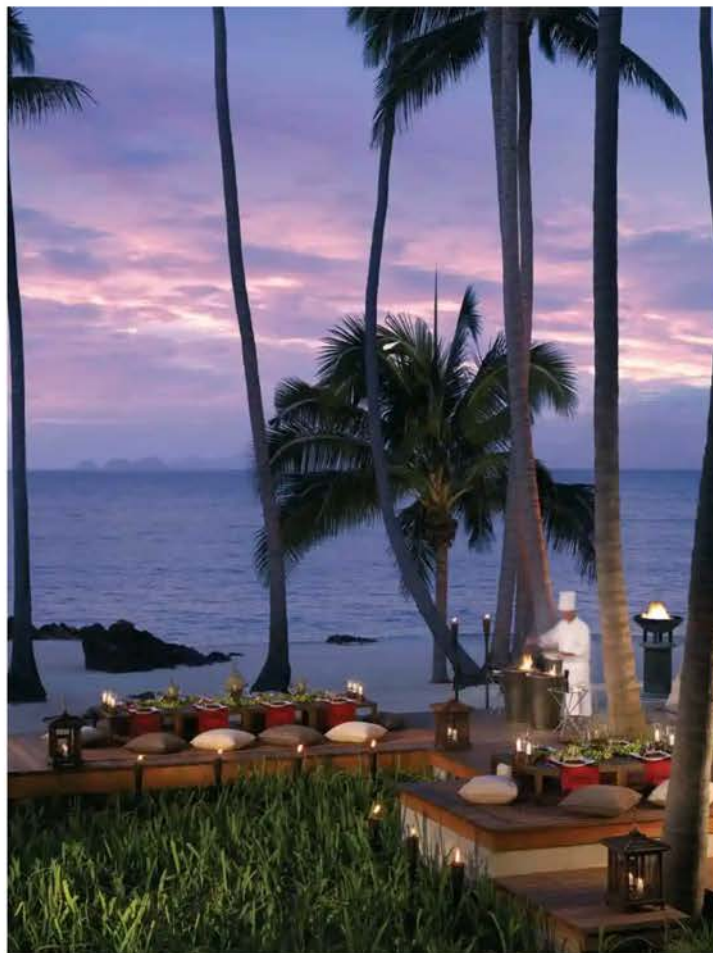
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back at 45, my accommodation has good detox possibilities. I have a delicious private villa with my own infinity pool and panoramic views of Laem Yai Bay. More importantly, I have a panoramic view of a 42" flatscreen. For those of us on a serious detox, there are 34 channels, DVDs, an iPod docking station and copies of Newsweek and Time. Why on earth would I ever want a 'no news, no shoes' holiday when I can have lots of news and lots of shoes? (On which note, tennis shoes of all sizes are available at the 45 tennis court, should I wish to amble down there with a cocktail to watch people playing).

To achieve a full detox and to help my waistline expand, a golf buggy service is available 24 hours a day. Even for journeys of less than a yard. Unusual fact: it takes three weeks to pass the test to get a golf buggy driver's license. Another good fact: it's just a short buggy ride to visit the resort's drive-in wine fridge: an electrical wonder that could double as an air raid shelter for several guests in the event that attacks from the mosquitos on a mission to kill escalate into full-blown mosquito war. (Joking aside, this is the sort of wine cooler you generally find in French chateaux....but *here* you can also follow up a visit with an elephant trek on paradise island.)

Once my detox is seriously underway and I'm having what can best be described as colonic irrigation in reverse, there's little inducement for me to move from my room. Fortunately there are plenty of ways for me to try to rid myself of my luminous skin without stepping outside. There's a fridge in my room with Mentos - sweets which, thankfully, have at least 500 additives and colours; a drawer filled with whisky and Scotch; another dedicated wine fridge; and a mini-bar plus an Espresso machine. Who in their right mind would ever want 'barefoot luxury' when you can have instead a key to this, your personal upmarket deli?

Yes, I'm now following a hardcore detox programme. The only exercise I'm prepared to do is to step into my delicious egg bathtub, a work of art in itself. I wallow in coconut bath salts, a breeze on my face and watch a boat bobbing on the waters below. Retox bliss? But with sudden dread, I realise this is all unhealthy healthy. So I order a champagne breakfast with scrambled eggs with white truffle oil with a side order of Shrek's favourite corn chips and a cheesy Hula Hula Hawaiian pizza. (Detox fans say that giving your liver a chance to clean itself out helps eliminate nasties through the digestive tract and skin. But doing it in reverse doesn't have the same nasty side effects.)



My order is delivered by staff with cigar-length smiles, and arrives in less than a nano of a nanosecond: service that puts the 45 in a league of its own. Even the most (four) seasoned detoxer will rarely have encountered service like this. The staff will probably stop the resort's palm trees swaying if I ask. "An elephant, madam? I'll have it with you in five minutes."

If I want to join in, there are endless detox activities: 24-hour business services; beach evenings of eating popcorn and watching Academy Award winners under the stars; tropical drink and cocktail mixologist classes; and beach barbecues with authenticity lite fire-eaters and Thai dancers. And, reassuringly, it's all watched and done by honeymooning Americans, investment bankers and ladies with trout lips, pert boob jobs and full *maquillage*. Not for me the detox crowd in bad moods and kaftans.

As my holiday draws to its end, I reduce my detox activities, aiming to find a level that I can realistically incorporate into my life at home. There's no point in detoxing, just to go back to my bad old habits of healthy eating and living. But I know that there will be social situations when I cannot be a hardline detoxer and still have friends. To prepare myself for a return to my real life, I eat Thai cuisine in the resort's restaurant, Lan Tania. It's sublime gnocchi from mashed 'potato' made of boiled jackfruit stones; and as for its green tea bread...mwah.

The resort's spa provides another way to wean myself off the more drastic elements of my detox – another good way to avoid detox withdrawals and the possibility of going cold turkey on the return Bangkok Airways flight. Treatments take place in an enchanted kingdom of villas and salas (covered verandas) in thick tropical rainforest and reached via wooden plank walkways and wooden steps. It's the spa that Tarzan and Jane would have chosen for their honeymoon. They should be so lucky.



I try the Siam Fusion. First there's Thai massage, which is like being in a one-person wrestling match (the brochure calls it 'Thai yogic stretches'). Next the therapist does battle with my pressure points. Then she rubs me with Luk Pra Kob (warm compresses of lemongrass and ginger) and finishes with an energizing deep pressure massage with essential oils. It's A\*. (The poor woman does an excellent job of trying to detox me; but, after my dedicated efforts to eat and drink myself silly, luckily there's some way yet to go.)

I was a Four Seasons virgin. Now I've been deflowered, I'm a Four Seasons junkie. I'll visit the 4S again when my detox levels become dangerously low. What's not to like? The fine fast food? Ambience? Activities? The location? Nothing. It's hardly surprising that I've become a 4S detox junkie. It's a resort that's luxurious and allows guests to replace toxins at their own pace: to overfeed, overindulge and listen to what your body *really* wants. As a pleasurable aside, the 4S is also the genius hotel group that introduced Wi-Fi airport transfer limos. The first service of its kind. Just to ensure that I can keep addicted to technology even on a brief car drive. Wi-Fi detox where have you been all my life? But then that's another story....

Visit [www.fourseasons.com/kohsamui](http://www.fourseasons.com/kohsamui) for more information and room rates.

Caroline Phillips ([www.carolinehillins.net](http://www.carolinehillins.net)) is an award-winning journalist who writes for the

...glossier glossies and the better nationals. She has written for the Sunday Times, The Times, Observer, Guardian, Independent, Mail on Sunday, Daily Mail and Evening Standard. Additionally she's published in a variety of magazines, from Tatler to Harpers Bazaar and Vanity Fair. She's a consultant for Globalista - website for the discerning traveller - and contributing editor of Country & Town House and of Spear's. She also co-edits the Spear's Spa Guide.

Bangkok Airways ([www.bangkokair.com](http://www.bangkokair.com)), with the ASIA'S BOUTIQUE AIRLINE slogan, is the first private airline established in Thailand since 1968. Taking off daily with about a hundred flights per day from Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport, Bangkok Airways flies travellers from around the world to more than twenty exquisite destinations across Thailand and Asia. Samui, Phuket, Trat (Koh Chang), Maldives are amongst the hottest beach selections, while Sukhothai, Luang Prabang, Siem Reap (Angkor) are World Heritage sites. Bangkok Airways' the only airline in Asia to have won the Skytrax Best Regional Airline for six consecutive years from 2004 - 2009. As a member of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), Bangkok Airways continues to provide comfort at an uncompromised safety standard to all passengers.

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