

Vegetarian Festival

Written by Administrator
Thursday, 25 March 2010 16:35

Phuket's Amazing Vegetarian Festival

Noise, Colour and Strange Doings...

Phuket's Vegerarian Festival is one of the strangest, and most amazing festivals in this festive country

Tourists lying on the beach bathe hot bodies with cool suntan oil. In the streets, Chinese celebrants bathe cool bodies in hot oil. The former is, of course, commonplace, but the latter is bizarre, one of a number of fearsome feats of self-mortification performed by devotees during Phuket's annual Vegetarian Festival.



For nine days in October the air of tropical torpor is shaken off and Phuket explodes into noisy scenes that are thrilling, astonishing, colourful, crowded - anything but relaxing. The celebration of the biggest event in the island's festive calendar gives a whole new perspective on this

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particular island paradise.



By far the largest of Phuket's ethnic minorities are the Chinese, who migrated from neighbouring Malaysia as well as China itself in the 19th century. Adept in trade and attracted by a revitalized tin mining industry, they had enormous impact and have dominated much of Phuket's development.

Most dramatic of these enduring Chinese influences on the cultural fabric is the annual Vegetarian Festival, celebrated in a style unseen elsewhere in Thailand. Held in the ninth lunar month (usually in October), this amazing affair blends religious devotion, ritual, merry-making and awesome displays of supernatural powers. It is essentially Chinese in origin and practice but has drawn on various other cultural influences - not least the Thai passion for any festival — to become a distinctively Phuket pageant.

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With the exception of the vegetarian festival, this is a public event, and the island's temples (Chinese temples)



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