

**2012 WHALE SHARK, MANTA RAY & TURTLE AWARENESS PROGRAM  
BLUE GURU DIVING @ GOLDEN BUDDHA BEACH RESORT**

**8 NIGHTS PACKAGE INCLUDING:**

**4 nights at Golden Buddha Resort with:**

- Transfer from Phuket Airport to Golden Buddha, Koh Phra Thong
- Choice of unique house
- All meals during stay at resort
- Transfer from Golden Buddha to liveaboard

**4 nights on liveaboard boat in twin or double cabin with:**

- All meals, snacks & soft drinks during liveaboard trip
- 14 dives at Similans, Koh Bon, Koh Tachai & Richelieu Rock
- 4 days dive equipment rental
- Instructor/dive guide
- PADI Whale Shark specialty course + certification
- PADI Manta Ray specialty course + certification
- PADI Turtle Awareness specialty course + certification
- Similans & Surin National Parks entrance & diving fees
- Return transfer to Phuket Island

**2012 PROGRAM DATES:**

**17<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> February 2012 (17-21 at Golden Buddha; 21-25 on liveaboard)**

**16<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> March 2012 (16-20 at Golden Buddha; 20-14 on liveaboard)**

**20<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> April 2012 (20-24 at Golden Buddha; 24-28 on liveaboard)**

**Further dates available on request for groups of 4+.**

**PRICE PER PERSON BASED ON DOUBLE OCCUPANCY:**

**Above 8 night package with:**

- Beach Back Deluxe House from \$1570 + service/tax = \$1760
- Beach Back Luxury House from \$1595 + service/tax = \$1795
- Beach Back Premier House from \$1615 + service/tax = \$1815
- Beach Front Luxury House from \$1670 + service/tax = \$1880
- Beach Front Premier House from \$1730 + service/tax = \$1950
- Beach Front Exclusive House \$2080+ service/tax = \$2365

**All prices are subject to 10% service plus 7% tax on GBB house/meals.**

**Prices vary based on choice of house – please ask for a personal quotation.**

**Prices for singles, groups & non-divers also available upon request.**

**OPTIONAL EXTRAS:**

**9<sup>th</sup> night at Phuket Airport Hotel in double, twin or single room**

**Local diving, snorkeling, kayaking & rainforest trekking from Koh Phra Thong**

**Offshore diving by long tail boat at newly discovered reef & boulder sites**

**National Park day trips from Golden Buddha to Richelieu, Tachai or Surin**

**Other PADI Specialty courses e.g. Nitrox, Photography or Buoyancy**

**Other PADI courses e.g. Advanced Open Water (recommended if not already)**

**Nitrox air fills on liveaboard trip (only for nitrox certified/student divers)**

**Underwater camera rental (included for Photography specialty dives)**

**Dive computer rental or purchase (recommended if don't own)**

**Diving insurance (required if not covered by travel/diving policy already)**

**Massages & spa treatments at Golden Buddha**

**Extra nights at Golden Buddha before or after liveaboard trip**

## **DIVING PRE-REQUISITES:**

Our Whale Shark, Manta Ray & Turtle Awareness Program is open to everyone, including those without any diver certification...yet!

Anyone without a diver certification can complete the PADI Open Water course with Blue Guru during their 4 day stay at Golden Buddha.

As many dives during the liveaboard trip can be to a maximum depth of 30m, PADI Advanced Open Water certification (or equivalent) is highly recommended for all divers. Those who already have Open Water certification can complete the PADI Advanced Open Water course in just 2 or 3 days, either during their stay at Golden Buddha, on the liveaboard trip or a mix of both!

Non-divers are welcome and can snorkel at many dive sites. However, some offshore dive sites are subject to strong currents, so are not suitable for snorkelers.

All divers will need to complete the standard PADI medical questionnaire to evidence fitness to dive and have proof of diving insurance (which Blue Guru can arrange for the week if required).

## **LEARN ABOUT WHALE SHARKS, MANTA RAYS, TURTLES & MUCH MORE!**

February - April is prime whale shark & manta ray season on our doorstep in Thailand's Andaman Sea! It is also when endangered turtles come to nest on Koh Phra Thong's undeveloped 15km beach. During these months we can offer a unique experience that supports eco-tourism and marine conservation with the opportunity to learn about, search for & identify migrating whale sharks, manta rays & turtles.

Gentle, rare & mesmerizing, whale sharks can grow up to 12m long, weigh upwards of 13.6 tonnes & live for 70 years. The most elusive & largest fish in the sea is found in warm tropical waters & it is believed to have originated 60 million years ago. Currently listed as a vulnerable species by The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), whale sharks are frequently targeted by commercial fisheries.

Relatively little is known about this magnificent fish & even less known about their mating habits, migration patterns & actual living population size. Our Whale Shark Program's objective is to raise awareness about whale sharks & help protect this rare species. In particular, this involves learning how to safely observe any whale sharks spotted whilst photographing them to help identify them & monitor migration paths. Participants will then have the opportunity to submit any photos & data gathered to the ECOCEAN and Shark Trust research databases.

No diver would forget an encounter with an awesome Manta Ray! The largest in the ray family, their graceful swoops as they feed, swim & clean are breathtaking to observe. But not everyone is aware you can actually identify individual Manta Rays. Participants will learn about manta rays' biology, distribution & the threats they sadly face. They will also have the opportunity to contribute to research being conducted in Thailand to track specific manta rays through photo identification.

Koh Phra Thong and the nearby Surin Islands are home to 4 types of turtles: Hawksbill, Leatherback, Green & Olive Ridley. During your holiday, we offer the opportunity to learn more about turtles, which nest in the long stretch of beach in front of the resort. These species of turtles have survived since the age of dinosaurs and yet disappointingly numbers are in decline. Participants will learn about threats turtles face from man & nature and how to report sightings. They will have the options to join a daily early morning walk to monitor the beach for turtle nests

and/or visit the local village where there is a museum run by the turtle conservation project staff. Want to learn even more about local marine life, coral reefs or aquatic conservation? Blue Guru offers a wide range of marine conservation activities & diving courses that will enable you to get even more satisfaction from your time underwater. If particularly interested in conservation, please ask for information on PADI Coral Reef Conservation & Project AWARE specialties, CoralWatch survey & clean ups.

## **PACKAGE DETAILS**

### ***Start your holiday with 4 days luxury of nature at Golden Buddha Resort...***

Golden Buddha Beach Resort has long been regarded as one of Asia 's finest eco-resorts. Established 17 years ago, it is the only resort on a spectacular uninhabited 10km beach and private bay on Koh Phra Thong (Golden Buddha Island). The area remains one of the last unspoiled coastal areas in Thailand, so guests can enjoy an experience completely in touch with nature.

Golden Buddha Beach Resort on the Andaman Sea coast comprises uniquely designed beach houses that comfortably sleep between 2 - 7 people. The tropical island resort has only 26 private beach houses, so crowds are non-existent while peace, privacy and tranquility are guaranteed. Both exotic and rare wildlife can often be viewed: hornbills & monkeys are commonly seen. The pristine beach remains one of Thailand's few nesting sites left for leatherback turtles.

On day 1, you will be met by one of our drivers at Phuket International Airport (or the surrounding area) and transported to Kuraburi by car. From there you will travel to Golden Buddha Beach Resort on Koh Phra Thong by traditional long-tail boat to begin your 8 night holiday of a lifetime.

All meals are included throughout your stay at Golden Buddha. The food is both delicious & plentiful. Choose any number of dishes from the breakfast & lunch menus, with a good selection of Thai & western foods. At dinner, enjoy a spread of Thai dishes with unlimited refills. Drinks are extra and can be settled in cash or by credit card direct to the resort at the end of your 4 night stay.

You can relax & pamper yourself during your stay by choosing from a range of massages & spa treatments available at a supplement. All massages & spa treatments are delivered in the privacy of your own house by one of Golden Buddha's masseurs. These can be booked on arrival at the resort and paid for in cash or by credit card direct to the resort at the end of your 4 night stay.

You also have the option to join one of Blue Guru's diving day trips to either Surin Islands, Richelieu Rock in Surin National Park or Koh Tachai in Similans National Park, depending on our diving schedule during your stay. This is a great extra opportunity to experience some of Thailand's top dive spots. It is also ideal for those doing extra training dives such as Open Water, Advanced Open Water or Peak Performance Buoyancy specialty. There is also the added benefit of trying out rented dive kit on a day trip to ensure a perfect fit before we go on the liveaboard.

Blue Guru takes pride in maintaining high quality rental dive equipment. All our dive kit is less than 3 years old. Our main brands are Oceanic, for regulators & BCDs; Mares for dive fins; and Deep Blue for masks & 3mm shortie wetsuits. Our discounted dive kit rental package includes all the aforementioned items. All diving also includes tank, weight belt & weights rental. We offer a choice of 10lt, 12lt & 15lt aluminium tanks and 0.8kg & 1.5kg lead weights. We also have dive computers, compasses & underwater cameras available as rental extras. As we are based on a very remote island and maintain a limited retail stock, if you wish to purchase any dive kit items, please ask us for our catalogue before arrival, so we can order required items for you in advance.

Discounts are available for use of all own dive kit, i.e. BCD, regulators, mask, snorkel, fins and wetsuit. Please let us know upon booking if you intend to bring all your own equipment.

**... The package also includes 3 PADI eco distinctive specialty courses...**

Blue Guru will develop your knowledge through the PADI Whale Shark distinctive specialty course. You'll learn about:

- whale shark's biology, distribution & behaviour;
- their threatened existence & conservation projects underway;
- how to safely & passively interact with them;
- how to help identify specific whale sharks using their unique spot patterns.

You'll also be given guidance on how to:

- take photos & record data on whale shark sightings
- submit photos & data to the Whale Shark Project, so you can help support whale shark research & protection.

Blue Guru Diving is a registered operator for PADI's Project AWARE Whale Shark Project.

[http://www.projectaware.org/english/take\\_action/whale\\_shark\\_project.aspx](http://www.projectaware.org/english/take_action/whale_shark_project.aspx)

In the PADI Turtle Awareness distinctive specialty course you'll learn about:

- the role of turtles in the ecosystem
- seven species of sea turtles, their habitats and population statuses
- issues contributing to population decline
- key characteristics of turtles found in the area
- responsible dive and snorkel practices when observing sea turtles
- how you can promote sea turtle conservation
- how to submit data on sightings to Project AWARE to help monitor turtle populations
- conservation efforts underway on Koh Phra Thong

You will also have the optional opportunity to:

- join the local turtle project staff & volunteers on an early morning beach monitoring walk
- visit their museum in the local village.

In the Manta Ray distinctive specialty course you'll learn about:

- manta ray's biology, distribution & behaviour
- how to safely & passively interact with them at cleaning stations
- how to help identify specific manta rays through their unique underside

You'll also be given guidance on how to:

- take photos & record data on manta ray sightings in Thailand & Burma
- submit photos to a local manta ray sighting database, so you can help support manta ray research & protection in Thailand & Burma

If this is not enough to satisfy your appetite for environmental learning, you can also add in 2 more optional PADI eco-specialty courses...

Project AWARE is a non diving specialty course which builds awareness of our aquatic world, the threats it faces & what we can do to help conservation.

Coral Reef Conservation is another non diving specialty course which builds awareness specifically about coral reefs, their importance to eco-systems, the threats they face and what we can do to help conserve them. Blue Guru also provides all participants in this course with training on how to conduct Coral Watch surveys. This adds a practical dimension to the course, enabling participants to contribute to valuable research on coral reef health.

If participants complete 5 specialties during the Whale Shark Program, i.e. 2 extra on top of the 3 included, Blue Guru offers an additional substantial discount on all 5 specialty courses. Completing 5 specialties would also entitle Rescue Divers with 50 logged dives to apply for Master Scuba Diving rating: PADI's highest recreational diver level. Please ask us for extra

information if you are interested in pursuing this development goal.

***... During your stay there are plenty of extra activities to enjoy....***

As well as offering fun diving & the whole range of PADI courses, Blue Guru also run many other optional extra activities & excursions to keep you occupied whilst staying at Golden Buddha!

For those who want to spend time in or on the water, you can choose from:

- Local diving & snorkeling by shore or by 5 minute boat ride in the bay
- Offshore diving by traditional long tail boat at recently discovered dive sites
- Kayaking through the local mangroves or over the regenerating coral reefs

For those who want to explore on land, you can go rainforest trekking on Koh Ra with a visit en route to Koh Phra Thong's Lions Village, built after the Tsunami to re-house local people.

You can also take a wide range of PADI dive courses with Blue Guru during your stay....

The PADI Scuba Review is highly recommended for any certified diver who has not dived for a year or more.

The PADI Open Water course takes just 4 days to complete at Golden Buddha resort with Blue Guru, resulting in the most recognized diving certification in the world.

The PADI Advanced Open Water course takes just 2 or 3 days to complete, developing highly valuable skills & knowledge. It's also great fun, consisting of 5 adventure dives:

- Navigation & Deep dives (max 30m)
- Choice of 3 other adventure dives from list below (PPB, Night & Photography recommended)

PADI Specialty courses combine particularly well with the Whale Shark Program to develop valuable diving skills or build more knowledge about other marine life & conservation, e.g.

- Underwater Naturalist (2 dives)
- Fish Identification (2 dives)
- Peak Performance Buoyancy (2 dives)
- Boat Diver (2 dives)
- Drift Diver (2 dives)
- Digital Underwater Photographer (2 dives)
- Underwater Videographer (3 dives)
- Night Diver (3 dives)
- Underwater Navigation (3 dives) (only at Koh Phra Thong)
- Search & Recovery (4 dives) (only at Koh Phra Thong)
- Deep (4 dives)
- Enriched Air Diver (aka Nitrox) (no dives; 2 optional nitrox dives; only on liveaboard)
- Project AWARE – aquatic conservation awareness (no dives; open to non-divers too)
- Coral Reef Conservation (no dives; open to non-divers too)

All the above courses can easily be integrated into your diving holiday package, either at the resort or during the dive trip. So you can choose any extra training to suit your interests. More info on all PADI courses can be found at:

[http://www.blue-guru.org/PADI\\_courses\\_thailand.html](http://www.blue-guru.org/PADI_courses_thailand.html)

[http://www.blue-guru.org/PADI\\_specialty.html](http://www.blue-guru.org/PADI_specialty.html)

***...Continue your experience with 4 days liveboard diving at Similans, Koh Bon, Koh Tachai & Richelieu Rock...***

During the afternoon on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of your holiday, you will transfer from Golden Buddha to Khao Lak by long tail boat & car. There will be some time for shopping in Khao Lak, if desired.

After boarding the liveboard boat that evening, you'll be given a boat briefing & dinner before setting sail. You will be eating a lot on this liveboard trip: 4 meals a day, snacks & fruit available all day! Juice, water, tea, coffee & hot chocolate are also included & available all day.

Your 4 days on board will also be packed with diving... 14 dives including 3 night/sunset dives. You'll visit some of Thailand's top dive sites including Similans, Koh Bon, Koh Tachai and one of the world's top 10 dives sites: Richelieu Rock, famous for whale shark sightings!

Searching for whale sharks is exciting enough but imagine the exhilaration when you actually spot the largest fish in the world: truly awesome!

Last season we frequently spotted manta rays at Richelieu Rock and at Koh Bon, which is regarded as the local manta magnet!

Turtles are often seen whilst diving throughout Similan & Surin National Parks. You may even spot them during surface intervals on the boat!

Obviously being nature, we can't guarantee any whale shark, turtle, manta ray or other marine life sightings. However you increase your chances by being in the water, especially in this area!!

During the liveboard trip you will be sleeping in a double or twin cabin (subject to preference & availability). The boat can accommodate up to 24 guests in double, twin or 4 person cabins. There are 3 shared bathrooms, each with a toilet, shower & basin. The bathrooms are between the cabins & the dive platform. Dive times are staggered for dive groups, so queues for bathrooms before/after dives are avoided!

The boat has a large dive platform. You will assemble your equipment for the 1<sup>st</sup> dive and from then on your tank will just be re-filled between dives. Easy! Nitrox fills are available at a supplement. Divers are split into groups of about 4 per divemaster. Dive groups are given different times for kitting up, so there is always plenty of room on the dive deck. There are dunk tanks available on the dive deck to rinse cameras, computers etc. after each dive. Camera & computers are available for rental at a supplement.

Upstairs there is a large, covered dining area where 4 meals a day are served and snacks & soft drinks are always available. Dive briefings are also conducted here. There is also a lounge on this top deck, where you can relax & watch DVDs or read fish identification books.

After lunch on the last day of your holiday, you disembark from the liveboard boat in Khao Lak. Mid afternoon you'll be transferred back to your preferred location on Phuket arriving approx. between 5-6pm .

Don't forget, you will not be able to fly on the last day of the holiday! The recommended minimum time before flying after multiple diving is 18 hours. The last dive will be late morning on the last day, so you can safely book flights for any time the following day from 6am onwards.

### ***...Some information on the amazing dive sites in the area...***

Water temperature between Feb-Apr is about 29 degrees, so a 3mm wetsuit is sufficient. Visibility is usually 25-30m but can be less in plankton-rich waters, favoured by filter feeders.

#### **Surin Islands**

Located 60km offshore from Kuraburi & just south of the Burmese border, the Surin Islands are one of Thailand's most relaxed & scenic travel destinations. Surin National Park headquarters is based on Koh Surin Nua. The Surin Islands boast fantastic snorkeling & amazing diving, especially around the south of Ko Surin Tai. In the shallows you will find very healthy hard coral reefs teeming with marine life. This is the place to see macro life in full force living in harmony with a large turtle population. Also common around Surin are sightings of manta rays & the occasional sail fish, as well as the possibility of Whale Sharks. You can dive or snorkel at the Surin Islands on an optional extra day trip with Blue Guru during your stay at Golden Buddha Resort. More info on Surin Islands can be found on our following website page: [http://www.kohphrathong.com/koh\\_surin\\_islands.html](http://www.kohphrathong.com/koh_surin_islands.html)

#### **Richelieu Rock**

A world top 10 dive site & the best place in Thailand to spot whale sharks, Richelieu Rock is an isolated pinnacle located 14km east of the Surin Islands, within Surin National Park. Being known for whale shark sightings is not Richelieu's only claim to fame.

Amazement awaits divers in every square meter of the dive site. From colorful soft corals to huge sea fans & sea anemones - the topography here is spectacular. The diversity of small & large marine life is un-matched anywhere else in Thailand & as such it's a favorite location for underwater photographers. Marine life spans from exotic macro life like ghost pipe fish, seahorses, frog fish, harlequin shrimp & nudibranch to cuttlefish, moray eels, octopus, barracuda, giant groupers & manta rays for those looking for possible encounters with larger species.

We will dive here during the liveaboard in search of whale sharks. It may be here that your included National Park diving day trip with Blue Guru is conducted during your stay at Golden Buddha. More info on Richelieu Rock can be found at:

[http://www.kohphrathong.com/richelieu\\_rock.html](http://www.kohphrathong.com/richelieu_rock.html)

#### **Koh Tachai**

Koh Tachai is the northernmost island in Similans National Park, 50km west of Koh Phra Thong. The main reef plateau is located approximately 700m south off the island & is completely submerged. The reef offers a plethora of colorful soft, hard & fan corals in combination with rock & boulder formations. Big schools of barracuda & batfish are regular sightings here & from time to time even the gigantic whale shark finds its way to Koh Tachai. Look for camouflage experts like the stonefish! We will dive here during the liveboard trip. It may be here that your included National Park diving day trip with Blue Guru is conducted during your stay at Golden Buddha.

More info on Koh Tachai can be found at: [http://www.blue-guru.org/thailand\\_scuba\\_diving/koh\\_tachai.html](http://www.blue-guru.org/thailand_scuba_diving/koh_tachai.html)

#### **Koh Bon**

Koh Bon is an island a few miles north of the Similan Islands, part of Similan National Park. The amazing underwater scenery includes an interesting wall that eventually fades into a long reef stretching down to a maximum depth of 42m. Manta rays are often seen here from Nov-May. You may also be lucky enough to encounter a whale shark feeding in the plankton-rich waters here. Koh Bon is a cleaning station for mantas & whale sharks and you can see them glide slowly past you while the cleaners do their work. The sandy spots at the deeper end are home to blue spotted stingrays, reef sharks & leopard sharks. We dive here during the liveaboard trip in search of mantas.

#### **Similan Islands**

The Similan Islands consist of 9 granite islands 65km off the Andaman coast, providing breathtaking scenery above & below the water. Enormous granite bolder formations form numerous swim throughs, gullies and canyons. The islands are fringed by extensive coral reefs and home to a multitude of tropical fish, with frequent sightings of turtles, rays and sharks. Similan National Park Similans National Park Headquarters is based on Island number 4 and you will have an opportunity to go ashore during your trip to experience the beautiful white sands there. We also conduct our Turtle Awareness dives in Similan Islands.

## Koh Phra Thong

The local dive sites on Koh Phra Thong are extremely convenient, accessible from shore or by 5 minute ride on our rigid inflatable boat (RIB). The maximum depth is only 10m but this doesn't limit the interesting marine life you can spot. At Hornbill Rocks, we have awesome honeycomb whip rays, countless nudibranch and scorpion fish. Living in the regenerating coral reefs around the 2 islands at Koh Pling, there are moray eels, juvenile lionfish & seahorse.

During 2011 we were lucky enough to discovered some brand new dive sites offshore from Koh Phra Thong. These dive sites are reached in 20 minutes on a traditional long tail boat. The diving here is subject to offshore currents & depth – on average, dives are conducted at 20m. So these sites are perfect for conveniently completed Advanced Open Water course dives. Sites include boulders, where morays, nudibranch & reef fish hide, and diverse coral reefs with huge seafans, table coral & sponges. More info on all our local dive sites can be found at: [http://www.blue-guru.org/thailand\\_scuba\\_diving/day\\_trip\\_kpt.html](http://www.blue-guru.org/thailand_scuba_diving/day_trip_kpt.html)

[http://www.blue-guru.org/thailand\\_scuba\\_diving/day\\_trip\\_gpl.html](http://www.blue-guru.org/thailand_scuba_diving/day_trip_gpl.html)

Diving at all our local dive sites can be added as discounted optional extras to your holiday.

### ***... Want to extend the adventure?...***

You can start your trip earlier by booking additional nights at Golden Buddha.

This will enable you to spend more time enjoying the luxury of nature and fit in more days diving with Blue Guru at Koh Phra Thong, offshore or in the National Parks!

You can also book extra nights at Golden Buddha after the liveaboard trip but this will involve extra transfer time/costs.

### ***...Lastly, a little info about Blue Guru Diving...***

The owners are highly professional & experienced PADI instructors. They will flexibly cater for all your diving interests.

Chris has taught & guided dives throughout Thailand & Malaysia for many years. He's therefore well placed to view Richelieu Rock as the best dive site in the region!

Helen, as a PADI Master Instructor, is qualified to teach the whole range of PADI courses, inc. Whale Shark & Turtle Awareness Specialties. She is also a Beautiful Oceans Science Instructor.

Blue Guru is defined by its commitment to environmentalism. Our underlying motivation is to protect the wide biodiversity within the local Andaman Sea through a variety of ways. We believe the most effective way to achieve this goal is through education of our customers & our local Thai community. We encourage our customers to learn more about the aquatic environment because we know from experience that you then get even more enjoyment from your diving & interactions with amazing marine life.

Blue Guru is a registered operator for Project AWARE, Coral Watch & Whale Shark Project.

Please contact us if you would like more info or would like to book this special diving package:

[Blue-guru@goldenbuddharesort.com](mailto:Blue-guru@goldenbuddharesort.com)