

TOURISM DAMAGE: THAILAND TO CLOSE KOH TACHAI ISLAND



Thai authorities aware of the tourism damage will close down the overcrowded Koh Tachai Island, which forms part of Similan National Park, because of the harm to the environment and natural resources caused by heavy tourism.

The island located off Phang Nga province will be shut down during the monsoon season between middle of May and middle of October along with other marine national parks, but Tachai would not be opened again for tourists.

The authorities however confirmed that divers and tourists will have access to some of the dive sites in Koh Tachai. Tunya Netithammakul, director general (Wildlife and Plants Conservation), Department of National Parks, said that **the goal is to rehabilitate the island as well as the sea before it is damaged beyond repair.**

Quoting experts, local media reported that a beach in the island can accommodate only about 70 people at a time. However, more than 1,000 tourists spend their holiday at the beach at times. Every year millions of tourists visit Thailand's islands and beaches. Local authorities are monitoring all the destinations for possible tourism damage and negative impact of the visitors.

Steve Downing, a UK national, who dived and snorkeled in Tachai last year, said that it is a mini paradise if it is not crowded. He added that **many inexperienced snorkelers upset the sensitive reef systems when they bash into the corals for taking photos of fish** by chasing them and feeding them. According to him, people are more interested in taking photos than the preserving wildlife.

Some of the other beauty spots around the world that have suffered tourism damage include:

Phi Phi Islands, Thailand

After the Hollywood movie "The Beach" was shot on the island, the tropical beauty spot has been subjected to heavy pressure caused by an uncontrolled tourism boom.

Cozumel Island, Mexico

As far as cruise operators are concerned, this is the second most popular tourist destination in the world. This has caused heavy damages to the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef.

Galapagos Islands, Ecuador

The isolated island's unique ecosystem has become extremely sensitive because of the spurt in the number of tourists visiting them and the invasive species they bring along.

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