

"LOVED TO DEATH"
Episode 04 "Phuket"
Final Timecoded Script

INTRO:

001 00:00:00:04 00:00:03:05

We all long for another time... another place

002 00:00:04:19 00:00:06:04

For wonder and excitement

003 00:00:06:17 00:00:08:18

Foreign lands and different cultures

004 00:00:09:21 00:00:11:21

But what happens when we go too far?

005 00:00:13:08 00:00:16:01

When our desire to escape becomes destructive

006 00:00:17:11 00:00:19:24

When we turn what we treasure most into ruin

007 00:00:21:17 00:00:24:09

When our love comes at the ultimate price

EPISODE 04:

008 00:00:35:16 00:00:37:10

In the heart of Southeast Asia

009 00:00:38:22 00:00:40:23

There is an island unlike any other

010 00:00:42:15 00:00:43:19

An island of beauty

011 00:00:45:02 00:00:46:12

Adventure and excitement

012 00:00:47:16 00:00:48:22

Peace and tranquility

013 00:00:49:23 00:00:51:06

The jewel of Thailand

014 00:00:52:05 00:00:54:14

Where waters are as blue as in your dreams

015 00:00:55:17 00:00:58:11

And the trees as green as you would ever wish them to be

016 00:00:59:16 00:01:01:01

But something is lurking

017 00:01:01:12 00:01:03:10

A story of lies and deceit

018 00:01:03:22 00:01:06:20

Of a paradise corrupted by ambition and greed

019 00:01:08:00 00:01:10:08

Where beauty is used and exploited

020 00:01:12:03 00:01:14:17

Destroying everything we thought we came for

021 00:01:28:20 00:01:32:20

Phuket is a small province of Thailand, roughly the size of Singapore

022 00:01:33:07 00:01:36:22

Made up of 33 islands located on the southwest coast

023 00:01:37:23 00:01:40:03

Centered around the main island of Phuket

024 00:01:40:12 00:01:42:03

The biggest island in Thailand

025 00:01:42:16 00:01:48:03

With additionally well-known islands in the province being the Similan Islands and the Phi Phi Islands

026 00:01:48:14 00:01:51:24

All situated between Phang Nga Bay and the Andaman sea

027 00:01:52:18 00:01:56:00

It is divided into 3 administrative districts

028 00:01:56:11 00:01:59:22

The capital district of Mueang Phuket in the south

029 00:02:00:06 00:02:01:17

Kathu in the west

030 00:02:02:07 00:02:03:24

And Thalang to the north

031 00:02:04:19 00:02:08:19

Phuket has a total population of over 600 000 people

032 00:02:08:24 00:02:12:20

Widely distributed throughout the 103 townships and villages

033 00:02:13:05 00:02:17:11

The only city being Phuket City with a population of 75 000

034 00:02:18:11 00:02:21:16

Like much of the country, the majority are Buddhist Thais

035 00:02:22:15 00:02:27:07

As well as people of Chinese descent, who originally migrated during the 19th century

036 00:02:29:12 00:02:42:02

With 20% of the population being Muslim descendants of the original sea-dwelling indigenous peoples of the island, many ethnically Malay, mostly found in the rural areas outside of the towns and resorts

037 00:02:42:09 00:02:50:03

Another 21% being expatriates, most from Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia as well as western countries

038 00:02:52:15 00:03:00:03

Formerly a center for mining and trading metals such as tin, strategically situated between the Indian and Pacific oceans

039 00:03:00:19 00:03:05:18

The two biggest industries in the province today are the rubber tree plantations and tourism

040 00:03:07:24 00:03:11:10

The latter transforming it into the wealthiest province in Thailand

041 00:03:12:01 00:03:16:13

Widely known as not only one of the premiere tourist destinations in all of Asia

042 00:03:17:03 00:03:21:01

But frequently ranked as being in the top 10 destinations in the world

043 00:03:21:17 00:03:27:01

The annual total number of visitors exceeding 25 million, coming from all over the world

044 00:03:27:19 00:03:34:22

The peak of tourism being during Christmas season, with northern Europeans and Asians looking to escape the harsh winter cold

045 00:03:35:05 00:03:38:18

Most tourists arriving straight to Phuket International Airport

046 00:03:39:03 00:03:41:02

The second largest airport in Thailand

047 00:03:41:15 00:03:55:14

From countries such as China, UK, Australia, Germany, France and the United States, with numbers of tourists coming in from Russia dramatically increasing over the past 5 years, expected to surpass all others by 2025

048 00:03:55:23 00:04:02:03

While most Asian visitors center around the country's capital Bangkok over 500 miles north

049 00:04:02:09 00:04:05:19

For its historical, natural and cultural sights

050 00:04:06:21 00:04:12:24

Phuket has become a focal point for westerners for its photogenic white sand beaches and turquoise waters

051 00:04:13:06 00:04:16:08

Attracting surfers, divers and swimmers

052 00:04:16:21 00:04:21:04

With most tourism activities centered around the beach and town of Patong

053 00:04:22:10 00:04:26:06

Known as the party capital of Asia, renowned for its nightlife

054 00:04:29:07 00:04:36:09

Dozens of hotels, bars and clubs specifically catering to foreigners making Patong a Mecca for tourists

055 00:04:38:21 00:04:42:20

With quieter resorts and beaches catering to more upscale tourists

056 00:04:45:06 00:04:56:11

Daily tours going out to the nearby smaller islands that are ideal for snorkeling, scuba diving, fishing and appreciation of the unique tropical wildlife of the province

057 00:04:58:10 00:05:05:05

The province as a whole known for its intensely tropical climate with alternating sunny days and heavy rains in the evening

058 00:05:06:23 00:05:15:12

Phuket is today widely advertised by travel agencies and even Hollywood films as one of the most emblematic tourist destinations of Asia

059 00:05:16:09 00:05:20:19

Glorified and revered, as well as being touted as the ultimate party trip

060 00:05:22:05 00:05:26:12

With the specific aim of attracting both young backpackers looking for adventure

061 00:05:26:21 00:05:30:16

As well as nuclear families wanting peace and relaxation

062 00:05:31:15 00:05:35:08

Leading to the largest population growth rate in all of Thailand

063 00:05:36:13 00:05:40:01

But also bringing with it perils of increased crime rates

064 00:05:41:05 00:05:42:11

Ecological issues

065 00:05:42:17 00:05:44:18

And overdevelopment of their beaches

066 00:05:45:22 00:05:51:20

The local population equally catering to the onslaught of tourists with accommodations and merchandizing

067 00:05:51:23 00:05:56:00

As well as exploited in a largely corrupt and criminal service trade

068 00:05:56:14 00:06:00:08

Raising the question; how loving this tropical paradise can persist

069 00:06:00:16 00:06:02:13

When visiting means destroying it

070 00:06:12:00 00:06:20:17

Little is known of the early history of Phuket as few traces remain after intensive mining operations taken throughout the islands in later years

071 00:06:21:16 00:06:28:03

The first residents of inland Phuket believed to have been primitive tribes similar to the Semang pygmies of present day Malaysia

072 00:06:29:16 00:06:34:21

While the first coastal inhabitants were a nomadic seafaring people known as Chao Leh

073 00:06:37:01 00:06:46:21

Travelling from cove to cove so as not to permanently deplete all natural resources, later developing a significant reputation as pirates of trading ships

074 00:06:49:24 00:06:55:01

Both groups having no written language and sharing basic beliefs of a spirit of nature

075 00:06:55:21 00:07:00:12

Leading to much of their history and culture being lost to the ravages of time

076 00:07:02:18 00:07:12:24

The majority of accounts of the early indigenous peoples come from foreign visitors and settlers, hailing from the Arabian peninsula, Sri Lanka, China and even Portugal

077 00:07:13:24 00:07:21:09

Who arrived with the intent to capture or trade valuable goods such as animal hides, timber, ivory, pearls and gems

078 00:07:22:18 00:07:28:05

Phuket City itself having been founded by Indian explorers in the first century BC

079 00:07:29:11 00:07:35:06

Only later overtaken by the Thai people migrating south from what is now known as China

080 00:07:36:08 00:07:42:02

Assimilating local culture and customs of both indigenous traditions and foreign influences

081 00:07:43:13 00:07:47:06

Adopting Sanskrit writing as well as Buddhism from India

082 00:07:48:23 00:07:57:24

Phuket and the nearby islands being among the few areas of present-day Thailand spared of the Khmer invasion during the 8th and 9th centuries

083 00:07:58:16 00:08:05:12

Instead becoming part of the Srivijayan Empire, itself made of clusters of independent city states

084 00:08:06:22 00:08:15:20

A sea-faring nation, the Srivijayan Empire centered around much of present-day Indonesia and Malaysia, united solely on the basis of trading

085 00:08:16:13 00:08:22:04

Asserting dominance over the region as the primary trade post between China and the Middle East

086 00:08:23:18 00:08:30:16

Until the expansion of Javanese kingdoms and empires broke it apart from within in the 13th century

087 00:08:32:21 00:08:

Falling into obscurity, with traders and pirates of Phuket becoming left to their own devices

088 00:08:40:01 00:08:42:21

Until the formation of the Kingdom of Siam

089 00:08:44:07 00:08:49:07

It was then tin was discovered in large quantities during the 16th century

090 00:08:49:13 00:08:53:01

Drawing thousands of Chinese workers to mine the island

091 00:08:54:19 00:08:57:17

Impacting the local population significantly

092 00:08:59:22 00:09:05:13

The tin mining also sparked significant rivalry among the main colonial powers in the region

093 00:09:06:10 00:09:12:08

The Dutch, French and English all seeking to trade significantly with the local rulers

094 00:09:13:19 00:09:18:06

Who soon favored the French as the exclusive trading partner of Phuket

095 00:09:18:11 00:09:23:22

Before being expelled from the island following the Siamese revolution of 1688

096 00:09:25:08 00:09:35:18

With an emerging nationalist movement directly opposing the Siamese king's openly collaborative foreign policies and close ties to King Louis XIV of France

097 00:09:37:07 00:09:41:12

Later on only allowing limited trading with the French and British

098 00:09:42:16 00:09:51:20

Though it remained far from a nation at peace with itself, with numerous attempts at deposing the king and instituting a constitutional monarchy instead

099 00:09:53:03 00:09:56:01

Ultimately succeeding in 1932

100 00:10:01:24 00:10:06:09

After which military rule reigned over Phuket and Thailand at large

101 00:10:09:10 00:10:12:17

Allying itself with Japan during World War II

102 00:10:15:21 00:10:20:10

Before the military regime was ousted by independent government officers

103 00:10:23:18 00:10:30:03

Instead holding democratic elections for the first time following the end of the war in 1945

104 00:10:31:13 00:10:38:01

The following years being marked tumultuous with numerous power struggles and attempts at reforming Thai politics

105 00:10:39:05 00:10:41:18

With significant support from the US

106 00:10:42:03 00:10:46:08

Forming close ties and developing a mutually beneficial relationship

107 00:10:48:07 00:10:52:21

Wherein the US aided with building up educational systems and healthcare

108 00:10:53:08 00:11:01:14

And Thailand allowed the presence of US military bases on Thai soil, to help combat the perceived communist threat in nearby countries

109 00:11:02:05 00:11:06:07

Which later became a focal point during the American war in Vietnam

110 00:11:09:24 00:11:18:21

The military dictatorship ended however, with the student uprising of 1973 reinstating a brief and untenable democracy

111 00:11:19:20 00:11:22:18

With ensuing years of instability and bloodshed

112 00:11:24:04 00:11:30:01

Leading to a significant economic downturn as foreign traders and tourists became wary of traveling

113 00:11:33:06 00:11:37:16

Until democratic elections were held once more in 1992

114 00:11:39:02 00:11:43:23

Though questions of human rights violations and freedom of speech remain today

115 00:11:44:14 00:11:49:18

While mainland Thailand has been engaged in civil unrest continuing until today

116 00:11:51:23 00:11:55:03

Nevertheless, tourism has largely recovered in Phuket

117 00:11:55:14 00:11:59:04

Due in large part to its separation from mainland Thailand

118 00:12:03:01 00:12:06:15

As well as its importance in the overall Thai economy

119 00:12:19:04 00:12:22:12

Phuket is today plagued by a multitude of issues

120 00:12:22:23 00:12:25:13

All pertaining to the presence of tourism

121 00:12:26:21 00:12:29:20

Ranging from environmental to socio-economic

122 00:12:30:15 00:12:39:07

The ever-increasing number of foreign tourists arriving in Phuket every year necessitating the construction of more and more hotels and resorts

123 00:12:40:05 00:12:43:10

Particularly along the western coastlines of the island

124 00:12:43:22 00:12:49:00

Limiting tourist activities increasingly to depend on over-developed beaches and areas

125 00:12:49:24 00:12:53:16

As tourist numbers have nearly doubled in the past 5 years

126 00:12:56:07 00:13:04:01

And while the steady stream of revenue coming from these resorts have assisted in building better roads, hospitals and public utilities

127 00:13:06:05 00:13:10:01

It has also had a significant impact on the conservation of Phuket

128 00:13:11:00 00:13:16:10

With the many native species of the rainforest being pushed aside with shrinking habitats

129 00:13:20:01 00:13:23:14

Or forcibly captured and sold as pets for tourists

130 00:13:24:01 00:13:29:21

Despite many species being endangered and not able to survive taken out of their natural habitat

131 00:13:31:23 00:13:40:00

As well as reportedly being threatened with both land and air pollution as a direct result of the ever-expanding reach of the resorts

132 00:13:42:19 00:13:50:07

Also including over-consumption of water and an immense increase in non-recyclable waste filling up landfill after landfill

133 00:13:51:14 00:13:55:21

Or littered along the beaches as neglectful tourists are rarely punished

134 00:13:57:06 00:14:02:20

Or dumped in the sea due to lacking infrastructure in processing and managing waste water

135 00:14:03:23 00:14:09:08

As well as reluctance by resorts and hotels to spend on ecologically sound solutions

136 00:14:10:07 00:14:15:17

Instead focusing on immediate short-term profits rather than their ecological impact

137 00:14:17:24 00:14:21:22

Local law enforcement being significantly outnumbered by tourists

138 00:14:24:15 00:14:33:23

This has directly led to notable beach erosion throughout the west coast, the most trafficked areas having lost several feet over the span of a couple of decades

139 00:14:35:00 00:14:45:18

Increased traffic has also led to a sharp increase in carbon emissions in the region as boats, motorbikes and taxis have multiplied exponentially just in the past decade

140 00:14:47:10 00:14:51:06

Leading to further acidification of the surrounding waters

141 00:14:52:17 00:14:55:04

Directly threatening local marine life

142 00:14:59:14 00:15:05:16

While the scenic nature of Phuket and the Phi Phi islands has been prominently featured in American film and media

143 00:15:07:05 00:15:11:19

The frequent depictions thereof has also led to substantial ecological issues

144 00:15:12:01 00:15:18:07

As land owners have resorted to drastic landscaping and reshaping of the beaches and surrounding areas

145 00:15:18:12 00:15:23:12

To appear more aesthetically pleasing or to better match Hollywood depictions of Thailand

146 00:15:25:21 00:15:34:15

The local infrastructure has reportedly also repeatedly failed to accommodate the massive numbers of foreign tourists visiting the islands every year

147 00:15:35:06 00:15:37:15

Often featuring poor safety standards

148 00:15:39:04 00:15:41:13

And poorly maintained roads and streetlights

149 00:15:43:00 00:15:49:16

Which, coupled with heavy traffic congestion around urban areas, has led to many road accidents involving tourists

150 00:15:50:17 00:15:54:01

As well as leading to serious sanitary concerns

151 00:15:54:07 00:15:56:17

Among the local indigenous populations

152 00:15:58:04 00:16:00:16

With sub-standard public utilities

153 00:16:01:15 00:16:05:12

And many rural inhabitants having no electricity or running water

154 00:16:07:09 00:16:13:13

Local government policies have instead reportedly focused on enhancing tourism and tourist attractions

155 00:16:16:00 00:16:20:12

To increase revenue in an otherwise politically and financially troubled country

156 00:16:21:24 00:16:27:09

The increase of tourism has also directly led to a massive shift in the local economy

157 00:16:28:09 00:16:32:03

Once dependent on rubber production, tin mining and agriculture

158 00:16:33:01 00:16:39:05

Phuket's farmers, fishermen and miners are gradually losing ground to the chain hotels and resorts

159 00:16:44:20 00:16:54:05

As well as the constant renovations of the local infrastructure, which is in many places obsolete or broken down due to excessive wear and poor maintenance

160 00:16:57:14 00:17:01:00

This has led to a large portion of the indigenous population

161 00:17:01:09 00:17:04:01

Once independent and financially successful

162 00:17:04:10 00:17:06:13

To be pushed out of their farming grounds

163 00:17:08:17 00:17:12:09

While many new job opportunities arise in the tourism services

164 00:17:13:23 00:17:19:01

Many of the local indigenous population lack the qualifications necessary to attain them

165 00:17:20:15 00:17:25:24

Employers instead bringing in either foreign workers from Malaysia, Indonesia or the Philippines

166 00:17:26:23 00:17:29:07

Or from the nation's capital of Bangkok

167 00:17:31:06 00:17:39:19

While among the few that do adapt to the new job opportunities, their ancestral traditions and practices of farming and fishing are instead lost

168 00:17:42:21 00:17:46:22

With newer generations eager to abandon their historical background

169 00:17:48:00 00:17:50:12

And opt for employment in the tourism sector

170 00:17:55:06 00:18:03:11

While fishing has only increased in scale, incorporating large-scale fisheries to accommodate consumer demand for local seafood cuisine

171 00:18:04:24 00:18:07:18

Commercial fish stocks now facing depletion

172 00:18:09:09 00:18:13:11

Smaller private fishermen pushed out of the business by larger corporations

173 00:18:27:17 00:18:34:19

Tourists in Phuket are themselves found to be in increasing danger due to increased crime rates following their presence

174 00:18:34:24 00:18:38:03

Both from criminals as well as corrupt law enforcement

175 00:18:39:06 00:18:43:09

Drink spiking being one of the primary concerns for tourists in Phuket

176 00:18:43:20 00:18:48:05

Wherein criminals find and follow their intended targets going to bars and clubs

177 00:18:48:10 00:18:53:17

In order to discreetly drug their drinks either when they're not looking, or by bribing the bartender

178 00:18:54:09 00:19:00:20

After which they are taken to a quiet corner and robbed of all their possessions, including the contents of their hotel rooms

179 00:19:02:10 00:19:04:19

Many of which waking up with no possessions

180 00:19:05:11 00:19:08:04

And no recollection of where they are or how they got there

181 00:19:09:05 00:19:14:02

Aggressive sales tactics and scams also reported to be employed by strip clubs

182 00:19:14:14 00:19:18:21

Where any ordered food or drinks include hidden cover charges not listed

183 00:19:19:15 00:19:28:00

Similar scams are reportedly often employed with jet ski rentals where after use, the customer is charged with hidden pre-existing damages

184 00:19:28:15 00:19:36:07

Or where rented motorbikes are stolen by employees of the rental service who then attempt to charge the cost of the motorbike to the customer

185 00:19:37:15 00:19:44:24

Purse snatching, pickpocketing and armed robberies also remain a regular occurrence even on the streets of Phuket City and Patong

186 00:19:46:08 00:19:52:07

Where tourists either on foot or on rented motorbikes are targeted on dimly-lit roads and back alleys

187 00:19:52:17 00:19:56:05

Stopped by criminals with improvised weapons, who often physically injure their victims

188 00:19:56:10 00:19:58:20

Sometimes even with fatal results

189 00:19:59:17 00:20:05:13

Thailand having the highest number of deaths of Australians overseas as a result of criminal activities

190 00:20:06:00 00:20:08:14

With the numbers reported to be on the rise

191 00:20:10:01 00:20:13:08

Police officials in Phuket are also reported to be highly corrupt

192 00:20:14:04 00:20:20:04

Handing out heavy fines to unknowing tourists for wrong parking where no indications or signs were posted

193 00:20:20:11 00:20:25:00

Occasionally illegally detaining tourists to force them to pay heavy fines

194 00:20:25:22 00:20:29:22

One of the biggest threats to Phuket remains however sex tourism

195 00:20:30:13 00:20:35:01

With an estimated 10% of tourist dollars spent in Phuket going to prostitution

196 00:20:35:10 00:20:39:09

While not as notorious as some locations in mainland Thailand

197 00:20:40:01 00:20:47:21

Phuket has increasingly become known for its erotic massage parlors and red light districts specifically designed to cater to tourism

198 00:20:48:23 00:20:54:11

Prostitution constituting a total of 3% of the entire economy of the island

199 00:20:56:11 00:21:02:14

Some hotels even doubling as brothels with in-house massage staff offering illicit services

200 00:21:05:12 00:21:12:07

The practice is commonly publically displayed and advertised with lewd signs and thinly veiled euphemisms

201 00:21:13:17 00:21:17:12

With thousands of women exploited every year by tourists

202 00:21:17:18 00:21:23:13

Prostitution only having been banned in 1960 following pressure from the US and UN

202 00:21:24:02 00:21:30:10

Local legislation having been specifically phrased to control the industry as opposed to prevent it

203 00:21:32:03 00:21:39:17

While sex trafficking is a major concern on the mainland, sex trade in Phuket is limited to freelance agents or go-go bars

204 00:21:40:05 00:21:44:04

And massage parlors often run by older former prostitutes known as mamasans

205 00:21:44:13 00:21:48:15

Many of which coming from the Thai province of Isaan, the poorest in the country

206 00:21:49:13 00:21:53:12

Entering the trade to earn money to support their families from afar

207 00:21:54:00 00:22:03:13

The vast majority reported to be suffering from significant venereal disease, as the majority of sex acts with prostitutes are done without protection

208 00:22:04:03 00:22:08:11

And many are lured into taking drugs to cope with their circumstances

209 00:22:09:01 00:22:18:19

While culturally, many Thai people retain their view of sex trade as an intrinsic part of their society following centuries of widespread prostitution

210 00:22:19:15 00:22:27:03

Leading to little opposition or action taken against it, even leading legislators to consider legalization of prostitution

211 00:22:27:10 00:22:31:17

In order to instead regulate health benefits and taxable income in the country

212 00:22:32:00 00:22:36:11

As well as reduce corruption and improve the living situation of the workers

213 00:22:37:17 00:22:42:19

Though the local government appears unwilling to halt the constant onslaught of tourism

214 00:22:43:11 00:22:51:17

Only enforcing an anti-corruption act in 2014 by establishing military supervision over law enforcement agencies on the island

215 00:22:51:20 00:22:57:08

Actions met with derision from a population weary of military oversight and control

216 00:22:59:12 00:23:03:23

There may still be other ways of saving the once beautiful Land of Smiles

217 00:23:06:14 00:23:12:19

We can elect not to support hotels and resorts guilty of ecologically harmful practices

218 00:23:14:11 00:23:19:11

And petitioning the government of Thailand to enforce stricter laws and regulations

219 00:23:21:21 00:23:25:10

Opting instead for living with the true indigenous people

220 00:23:26:10 00:23:28:07

Reducing waste and traffic

221 00:23:30:00 00:23:33:02

And opposing prostitution rings, go-go bars and massage parlors

222 00:23:33:19 00:23:35:16

Before it's too late to save it

223 00:23:36:10 00:23:37:14

Inch by inch

224 00:23:39:16 00:23:41:01

Loving it to death