



Flipside: Freediving requires special breathing and relaxation techniques
Photo: Alexey

Confidence is high on my last day, though. I reach my personal best: 31 metres. It's incredibly satisfying – I'm surpassing limits that just days ago seemed impossible and the reward is experiencing a unique feeling of calm and solitude, with the deep blue sea in all directions. And Ensebio's right – rather than being a spectator, you feel part of the

underwater environment, just another mammal naturally under the sea. At the end of the day, Rodrigo gives us some advice for future freediving, our last homework exercise: 'The best homework is making love,' he says, smiling. 'It makes you happy; you feel peaceful, relaxed... perfect for freediving.' Just one more reason why these freedivers are so Zen.

Two-day beginner freediving courses with Apnea Total (www.apnea-total.com) cost around £106. Three-day advanced courses cost around £155. Graines flew to Bangkok using Expedia.co.uk (0871 226 0808), which has return flights from Heathrow with Emirates Airways for £550pp. For transport from Bangkok to Koh Tao, see www.tourismthailand.co.uk

> Koh Tao – other things to do

■ **Dive! Dive!** – With more dive schools than you can shake a snorkel at, Koh Tao is Thailand's premier diving spot, with courses from beginner to instructor level. Of the 20-plus dive sites close to the island, Chumponn Fringe is highly recommended for a chance to see bull sharks up to four metres long (pictured in main article). Diving conditions are best from December to April.



■ **Box clevver** – Monsoon Gym Island Muay Thai is Tao's best spot to see kickboxing matches or to have a go yourself with a personal training session.



■ **Tattoo you** – The streets around Mae Had Pier and Saree Beach are lined with tattoo parlours, particularly busy in the evenings when travellers have had a few Changs (beers) or 'buckets' for courage.

> Is Thailand safe?

Following riots in Thailand, at the time of press, all flights and package holidays were operating as normal and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) was not advising against travelling there, so don't be put off. Here, Bob Atkinson, travel expert at travelsupermarket.com, offers advice to those who are in Thailand or planning a visit:

■ **Avoid all gatherings and crowds** – the government has banned meetings of more than five people.

■ **Keep up with developments via the FCO website and the media.**

The FCO lists areas of the country where travel is advised against, so check regularly for changes.

■ **Always carry your passport and travel insurance details with you.**

■ **Register with the FCO Locate scheme** (www.fco.gov.uk/en). This ensures the FCO is aware you are in the country and is invaluable should trouble escalate and British people are advised to leave.

■ **If you wish to cancel or amend your holiday plans, consult your booking provider.**

METRO PROMOTION

WIN A TRIP FOR TWO TO THAILAND

It's Thai New Year and to celebrate, Metro has teamed up with the original beer of Thailand – **Singha** – to give one very lucky reader the chance to win an amazing trip for two to Thailand with Royal Orchid Holidays and West East Travel.

Singha is the original beer of Thailand and is still the choice of the people of Thailand today. To share your experiences of Thailand or to find out more about the amazing flavours, sights and sounds of this unique country, head over to Singha's new facebook page www.facebook.com/LoveThailand and become a fan. There's restaurant reviews and recipe ideas, plus tips on events and life in Thailand. You'll also have the chance this week to enter a daily draw for some great prizes like meals for two.

One lucky winner plus a friend will be jetting off with Thai Airways for a three night stay in a 5 star hotel in Bangkok with a further six nights in a luxurious hotel in Phuket by entering at www.metro.co.uk/singha.

You'll also get to experience exotic adventures in Thailand first hand on the amazing tours that are included too.

For your chance to win just send us a photo that shows your Thai experiences. Perhaps it's an image of you preparing your Thai banquet at home, the chef in your local Thai restaurant matching food flavours with **Singha** or a Thai delicacy being created in Bangkok. Simply go to www.metro.co.uk/singha to upload your picture to be in with a chance of being our lucky winner. No photo? No worries, head over to www.facebook.com/LoveThailand for the chance to win other prizes!

Remember that voting for the winning entry starts next week and you could win a digital camera just by voting!

Celebrate with Singha! Thai New Year April 12 – 18, 2010



www.royalorchidholidays.co.uk
www.westeasttravel.com

HOW TO WIN

To be in with the chance of winning and for full terms and conditions, go to www.metro.co.uk/singha to upload your favourite 'Thai' photo. Plus, keep an eye out as next week we'll be giving readers the deciding vote on the overall winner.

Today's competition closes at 11.59pm on Sunday, April 18 2010. The winner will be selected by a panel of judges from all valid entries received and notified by 5pm on April 30 2010. Usual Metro Promotional Rules apply here metro.co.uk/terms. The Editor's decision is final. The promoter is Metro, 2 Derry Street, London W8 5TT. This competition is open to those 18 years old or over and it is not the intention of the promoter to use this promotion in any way to encourage excessive consumption of alcohol.

FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN GO TO WWW.METRO.CO.UK/SINGHA

Share your Singha moments on facebook page

