

Looking To Travel Around Koh Lanta?

People Of Koh Lanta

There are three main groups of people living on Koh Lanta. The Thai-Chinese who are buddhist and live mainly in the north of the island, the Thai-Muslims who are found more in the south of Koh Lanta with a large population in the Khlong Kong area and finally the Chao Ley or Sea Gypsies.?

The Chao Ley are traditionally a sea faring race whose origins are somewhat cloudy but are generally believed to be of Indo-Malay descent. The Chao Ley were the first people to settle Koh Lanta several hundred years ago and they have resisted pressure from successive Thai governments to assimilate them into mainstream Thai culture. They have faced similar struggles in Burma and Malaysia.

Their main home on Koh Lanta these days is Sang Ga U at the far south eastern corner of the island. If you do visit please be respectful as this is their home and not a tourist attraction.

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Traditionally a nomadic people the Chao Lay have survived through a subsistence based fishing lifestyle. To some extent this way of life continues but their superior knowledge of the sea has made them an invaluable asset to the tourist economy. Every dive boat captain and the majority of boat crews will be of Chao Lay origin. There are not many farang (foreign) boatmasters who are brave, or stupid, enough to argue with the captain when it comes to wind, current or weather!

[Go to Top](#) 