

The Kai Bae Waterfall Walk

A 5 km. walk around Kai Bae including Kai Bae waterfall.



This loop will take you on a walking tour of the highlights of Kai Bae, which is why it's a relatively short walk. 90% of it could be undertaken by anyone with the ability to put one foot in front of the other for a couple of hours. However, there is a tricky and unavoidable section in the middle of the walk which requires using upper body strength and some confidence when navigating rocks adjacent to a 20 metre drop. So it isn't for young kids or anyone who isn't used to doing some physical activity.

In Brief.

The starting point is at Kai Bae Beach Resort. From here you'll head south along the sand before making your way up to the viewpoint overlooking the six islands that lie off Kai Bae and Klong Prao beaches. From this official viewpoint you'll then head 'off road' and head up the hillside further before making your way along the ridge of the hill. As the wide track ends a smaller one, used by local rubber farmers, meanders down into the valley.

The first sign of civilization you see is a simple shelter which is home to a rubber tapper. From here it's just a short stroll to a small stream. This is where the

fun starts. The trail heads into the rubber field on the opposite side, but you're going to be heading down the riverbed. Following the path of the stream will eventually lead you to the top of Kai Bae waterfall. Peering over the edge you'll see the pool below where you can take a swim in the cool, clear water.

The one problem facing you is that you have to get down to the pool, this is easier said than done as although there's a route it isn't obvious and it does involve lowering yourself down rocks using vines and an old rope.

From the pool another footpath will take you out of the jungle and you'll emerge in Kai Bae valley. Then you've got a stroll through the fruit field to look forward to, stopping to see the wild pig farm, and then crossing over the river again and walking north along the path of the original road that led to Kai Bae. From here there are some more nice views.

Then it's time to cut through someone's back garden and head back to the main road. The final stretch takes you off the road and to the shoreline at Coral Resort where you'll get some great views north to Klong Prao beach followed by a stroll

along the beachfront back to the starting point.

Essential Equipment.

As for equipment, a small backpack will be useful as you'll need somewhere to put water bottles & camera when you are on the tricky stretch. There will also be times when you need to get your feet wet – or when it is far easier to walk through shallow water than to try to find a way around.

Therefore walking sandals would be a better choice than trainers. I wore flip-flops but there again I'm used to wearing them every day and walking long distances in them and you probably aren't.

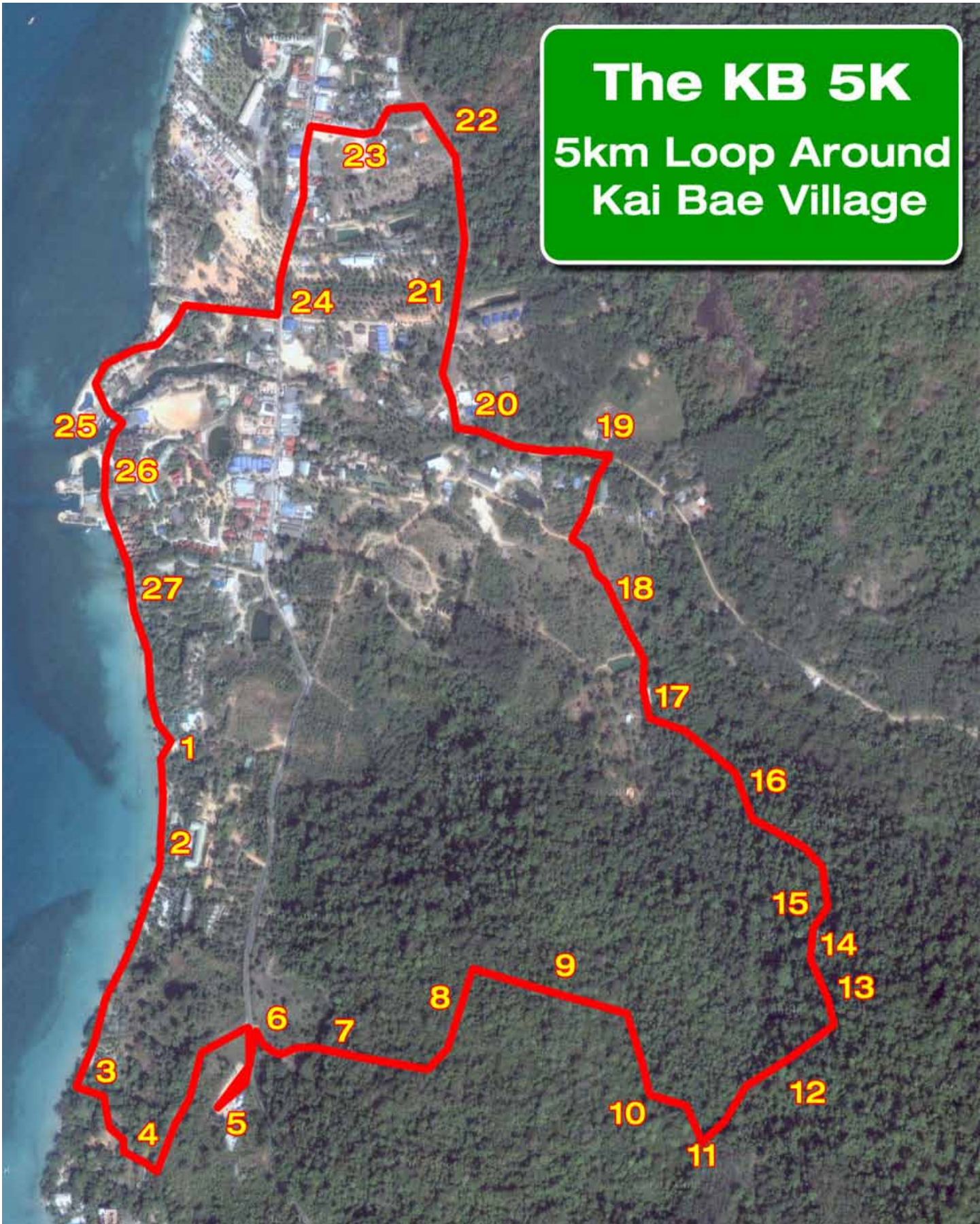
Because some clambering down steep rocks and also along river beds is required I wouldn't advise doing the walk in the rainy season when the rivers are likely to be in flood and the paths slippery.

Time Required.

This is a half day walk. Do it in the morning after breakfast and you'll get better photos from the hillside viewpoint as the sun will be behind you. (Also if you get lost then you have more chance of getting back to civilization

The KB 5K

5km Loop Around Kai Bae Village



during daylight hours.)

The Start & Finish.

I started at Kai Bae Beach Resort, near the south end of Kai Bae Beach.

But you could start and finish anywhere on the route in Kai Bae village.

The Route.

1. I chose the starting point as Kai Bae Beach Resort. There are two reasons for this, firstly it is easy to park your scooter just a few metres from the beach and secondly it'll give you a chance to stretch your legs a bit before you have to walk up hill.

2. From Kai Bae Beach Resort head south, along the sand if it is low tide or on the track that runs parallel to the beachfront. You'll go past Kai Bae Grand Ville and Mam Kai Bae resorts before reaching Porn's Bungalows.

3. Porn's Bungalows is one of the few resorts where time has stood still and the simple fan bungalows make for a laid back place to stay. The beachfront restaurant is also well known for it's nightly BBQ's and fire shows. Walk round to the rear of the restaurant and you'll see the access road.

4. Walking away from the beach this dirt road veers to the right and then after 100 metres joins the concrete access road to Sea View Resort. A short but steep uphill walk begins. When you reach the main road turn right.

5. Kai Bae viewpoint is 100 metres away. The views from

here are excellent, especially in the morning – with the sun behind you and at sunset – as the sun goes down over the islands. There's a couple of stalls where you can grab a drink, and it's worth stocking up with a couple of bottles of water here. You can also buy a souvenir t-shirt with image of the near iconic Kai Bae viewpoint 'rocketship' postbox on it.

6. Having shopped till you dropped head back onto the main road and back to the start of the access road to Sea View. Directly opposite, on the inland side of the road you'll see a track snaking up the pomelo field on the hillside. Follow the track up the hill, as you climb you'll get some more great views out to the islands.



7. The track then enters the jungle, it is overgrown in places but is, or was when it was originally made, wide enough to drive a pick up truck along. Stay on the track, you should still be heading uphill.

8. The track then levels out and you are now near the top of the ridge. There are no views as to each side of you are tall trees. The wide track then comes to an

end. On the right hand side you'll see a narrow, but obvious, footpath that heads down hill.

9. The footpath is easy to follow, it is obviously frequently used by the rubber farmers in the area. You'll notice very old rubber trees in with the jungle trees alongside the path. Whilst on this path you'll also see plastic water-pipes, used for irrigation. These run close to the path and so provide added reassurance that although there is no sign of life around, you aren't really too far from civilisation.



10. As the trail comes down to level ground you'll get a glimpse of a simple hut through the trees. As you approach you'll notice that it obviously has someone living there and there are a couple of dogs that may well come out to bark. Walk around the left of the house and the trail continues. A huge fallen tree currently blocks the way, the trunk is probably a metre or so in diameter. Climb over it and 100 metres later you're at a small stream.

11. Directly opposite you see an old rubber plantation and the trail heads off up the incline into the trees. (You can explore up here and follow the trail across this field then a very small stream

and into an overgrown plantation where it appears to go nowhere other than running around the rear of the field.) As there is no trail leading alongside the stream you'll have to walk down it.

12. There will probably be very little water in the river, so this section is more a matter of scrambling over the rocky river bed and under / over or around several fallen trees that lie across it. After a few hundred metres, the stream then converges with another, joining from the right.

13. Now follow the confluence of the two streams. Two things you'll notice – the first a pool which is deep enough for a quick soak if you want to cool off. The second are blue plastic pipes. These lead down the river into Kai Bae valley.

14. Zig-zagging along the river bank – or hopping from rock to rock you make your way to the top of Kai Bae waterfall. This 15m high fall isn't on any maps and probably doesn't merit a mention in your guidebook. Peering over the top you'll see a large pool at the bottom. Initially there doesn't seem to be a way down.

The river bank is quite high above you at this point and you can see how the opposite bank drops off down a sheer rock face. But before you get too worried remember that you can still see the blue water pipes and these now run down the left hand side of the waterfall.

Someone must have put them there and if they break someone must be able to get up to them to fix them. Therefore there must be a route of some kind. And there is – along the route of the pipes.



A fallen tree blocks the view so you'll need to crawl under this tree and then worn rocks indicate the pathway down. At the first very steep section you'll see a couple of vines running parallel to the water pipes. Use these to help lower yourself a couple of metres.

Then there's a slightly easier section where you continue to clamber down rocks until finally you are left around 3 metres above the water. There's no path here. But you should see an old rope on your left which reaches half way down to the ground.

A fallen tree makes things a bit trickier. You need to go over it or under it and then lower yourself down to the base of the rocks. It requires a bit of effort and will no doubt result in grazed knees or knuckles on the way.

15. Time for a break. The hard part is over and it's time to have a swim or sit on the rocks and have the small fish nibble your toes. The waterfall doesn't look as attractive as it might as the sight of even more water-pipes running alongside the river isn't a particularly pleasing sight. But in the ab-

sence of any central water supply on the island residents have to get their water supply from somewhere.

16. Now it is just a matter of following the trail by the left side of the river until you come out of the jungle at a spot close to two very modern bungalows. The first part of this path isn't obvious, you will probably have to walk in the water as the river bank is quite steep.

But pretty soon it levels out and the footpath is easily visible. Just keep following it and stay close to the river bank. You know you are getting near the end of the trail when the path begins to move away from the bank of the river and weave through the trees.

17. Walk in front of the two modern bungalows and after 100 metres you'll reach a dusty track. You should also see a couple more small houses in this area and there is a hand-painted sign for the waterfall. Follow the dirt road through the pomelo field.

18. After a couple of hundred metres look to your right. You can see a small stone wall compound set back from the track. This is a small wild pig farm. If you take a look over the wall you'll see a couple of dozen adult and baby wild pigs.

The piglets often have distinctive blond stripes running the length of their bodies. If you are ordering pork in a small local restaurant, there's a good chance it's wild pig like this rather than prime pork.



19. Shortly after passing the pig farm, take the dirt road on the left. This will take you past a few of the local's homes and over a ford across the river. By the time you reach this point the river will have totally dried up (unless you are visiting from June-November)

20. Turn left when you join the concrete road and follow the road around the sharp right hand corner. Next you'll pass a small restaurant and immediately after it you can't miss what is probably the largest tree in Kai Bae. At it's base it must have a diameter of around 5 metres. You'll see the two shrines here where local farmers and fishermen have traditionally made offerings to the tree spirit. And adjacent there's a concrete karaoke bar with a picture on the door of a guy who looks uncannily like a trouserless Barack Obama singing.

21. From here you could head back to the main road or if you want to walk a little further you can follow the path of the original public road. When the road was first made it ran around the back of the village, well away from the beach. You can still follow part of it by walking straight instead of taking the sharp left hand turn.

22. 400 metres walk and you reach a cleared section where you can walk up the hillside a little for some more great views over the roofs & treetops and out to sea.

23. It appears as though someone has built their house right across the route of the old road. So to get back to the main road, take the well worn footpath down the slope, past a few worker's shacks and veer to the left. You then join a section of concrete road that leads down to the rear of the old 'Blues Cha Cha' nightclub. Directly opposite, behind the phone booth, is a great little 'no name' restaurant owned by a local family. Very cheap, very good food.

24. Now you are on the main road turn left and follow the road south. Past Gajapuri Resort and The Chill. Take the access road to Coral Resort. Coral Resort is built on a headland that juts out into the bay. There's no beach here but the views from the pool looking north or south along the coastline are excellent.



25. A couple of small bridges, the first concrete, the second wood, lead from Coral Resort over a small canal where some small speedboats and fishing boats are usually moored, to the neighbouring Nang Nual Resort.

Both these resorts aren't that well known and Nang Nual in particular is a good choice if you just want a good value AC bungalow in a quiet location. The added bonus is that Nang Nual's guests can use the Coral Resort pool.

26. With the saltwater lagoon and large spirit house on your right and bungalows on your left walk straight and you'll see a short alleyway that leads you into the marina at Kai Bae Hut. There will probably be several trailered speedboats parked here.

27. Now it is just a matter of walking along the beach, past Kai Bae Hut's bungalows, KB Resort – the nicest of the beachfront resorts before arriving back at Kai Bae Beach Resort. (If you wanted a brief detour you could head inland along Kai Bae Hut's access road, past the owner's house on the left and you'll see a walled area. This is home to a small crocodile farm. There is usually a makeshift wooden platform somewhere near the wall which makes it easier to peer over and see the crocs.)

Hopefully you've been able to follow this. If you have, then I trust you had a good day out. If you haven't, then the light is probably fading and you're looking forward to a night sleeping rough in god knows where. Use the reverse side of this page to write your will.

If you have done the walk and discovered any interesting side trips, let me know.

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Photos and a Googlemap of this route are available online at:

www.iamkohchang.com

