

Thai Beach Made Famous in DiCaprio Film Closes to Tourists *from VOA*

The Thailand beach made (1)_____ in the Leonardo DiCaprio film “The Beach” is being closed to give it a break from tourists.

The beach sits on Maya Bay on Phi Phi Leh island, off the (2)_____ of Thailand in the Andaman Sea. The government ordered that no visitors will be permitted to go to the (3)_____ from June through September 2018. Thai officials say the decision is aimed at giving the area’s (4)_____ reefs and sea life a chance to (5)_____. Tourism officials say up to 5,000 visitors travel to the beach every day.

Thon Thamrongnawasawat is an ocean scientist and member of a government committee on environmental development. He told the Associated Press the closure is needed to help the beach (6)_____. “It’s like someone who has been working for (7)_____ and has never stopped,” he said. “Overworked and tired, all the beauty of the beach is gone. We need a (8)_____ for the beach.”

Maya Bay was used as the main filming area for the 2000 movie “The Beach.” It starred Leonardo DiCaprio as an American traveling through Asia with friends. The group is given a map that promises to lead them to paradise on earth. The film showed the world the bay’s beautiful white (9)_____ beaches and bright blue waters.

Many of Thailand’s ocean national parks are closed from mid-May to mid-October. But high tourist demand led officials to keep Maya Bay open the (10)_____ year. Recent studies by ocean biologists found a large part of coral reefs in the area had disappeared. Most sea life was also gone.

Thon had (11)_____ the government to close the area to visitors for many years. He said he thinks the action should have been taken at least 10 years ago. “But you know in Thailand we are a tourism industry country, and we need a lot of money, so before not so many people listened.”

A Thai official in the tourist area of Phuket told Reuters the closing of Maya Bay was one way to protect part of the country’s natural beauty, which will be important for tourism in the future.

But some local people are not completely happy. The head of the Phi Phi Tourist Business Association, Watapol Jantharo, said he was surprised when the closure was announced. He said he and others in the area thought Maya Bay would only be closed to (12)_____, while visitors would still be permitted to walk to the beach from the other side of the island.

“We are not (13)_____ protecting our environment,” Watapol said. “We know (14)_____ well that Maya Bay is our important (15)_____, like a rice field to a farmer. But we wish there were more communications about the government’s plan before the decision was made.”

Other Southeast Asian beach (16)_____ have also come under (17)_____ because of continued increases in the number of visitors. In the Philippines, the government began in late April a six-month closure of its popular tourist island of Boracay. The island is known for its soft, white sand beaches and (18)_____ nightlife.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte had called the area around Boracay a “(19)_____” because of large amounts of waste going directly into the ocean. “The (20)_____ content is already very high there. It only looks good because of the white coastline,” Duterte said. I’m Bryan Lynn.



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The Thailand beach made famous in the Leonardo DiCaprio film "The Beach" is being closed to give it a break from tourists.

The beach sits on Maya Bay on Phi Phi Leh island, off the **coast** of Thailand in the Andaman Sea. The government ordered that no visitors will be permitted to go to the **bay** from June through September 2018. Thai officials say the decision is aimed at giving the area's **coral** reefs and sea life a chance to **recover**. Tourism officials say up to 5,000 visitors travel to the beach every day.

Thon Thamrongnawasawat is an ocean scientist and member of a government committee on environmental development. He told the Associated Press the closure is needed to help the beach. "It's like someone who has been working for **decades** and has never stopped," he said. "Overworked and tired, all the beauty of the beach is gone. We need a **timeout** for the beach."

Maya Bay was used as the main filming area for the 2000 movie "The Beach." It starred Leonardo DiCaprio as an American traveling through Asia with friends. The group is given a map that promises to lead them to paradise on earth. The film showed the world the bay's beautiful white **sandy** beaches and bright blue waters.

Many of Thailand's ocean national parks are closed from mid-May to mid-October. But high tourist demand led officials to keep Maya Bay open the **whole** year. Recent studies by ocean biologists found a large part of coral reefs in the area had disappeared. Most sea life was also gone.

Thon had **urged** the government to close the area to visitors for many years. He said he thinks the action should have been taken at least 10 years ago. "But you know in Thailand we are a tourism industry country, and we need a lot of money, so before not so many people listened."

A Thai official in the tourist area of Phuket told Reuters the closing of Maya Bay was one way to protect part of the country's natural beauty, which will be important for tourism in the future.

But some local people are not completely happy. The head of the Phi Phi Tourist Business Association, Watapol Jantharo, said he was surprised when the closure was announced. He said he and others in the area thought Maya Bay would only be closed to **boats**, while visitors would still be permitted to walk to the beach from the other side of the island.

"We are not **against** protecting our environment," Watapol said. "We know **full** well that Maya Bay is our important resource, like a rice field to a farmer. But we wish there were more communications about the government's plan before the decision was made."

Other Southeast Asian beach **resorts** have also come under **threat** because of continued increases in the number of visitors. In the Philippines, the government began in late April a six-month closure of its popular tourist island of Boracay. The island is known for its soft, white sand beaches and **lively** nightlife.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte had called the area around Boracay a "**cesspool**" because of large amounts of waste going directly into the ocean. "The **germ** content is already very high there. It only looks good because of the white coastline," Duterte said.

