

SONEVA KIRI BLINGED UP CRUSOE

When you've got your London townhouse, an apartment in central Manhattan and a ski chalet in the Swiss Alps, what else do you need to complete your multi-million dollar property portfolio? Well, perhaps a beachfront retreat a little closer to home. But forget about the crowded beaches and hills of Phuket and Samui, and look east to the island of Koh Kood where Six Senses is building its latest resort, Soneva Kiri.

Anyone, who likes to jet around the world staying at the best hotels is familiar with Six Senses resorts and spas. The company, brainchild of Sonu and Eva Shivdasani, specialises in what they call "intelligent luxury." This means you can enjoy the very best comforts and facilities and pampering without compromising the local environment. It was a concept much-praised in their first hotel, Soneva Fushi in the Maldives, which, since it first opened in 1995 has become something of a millionaire's playground for the well-heeled in search of some shoeless days on the shore.

The difference at Soneva Kiri is that you are not renting out your little piece of paradise for a few nights, you can actually buy some of it for yourself as the resort has 20 private residences for sale. Adam Taugwalder, Director of Sales and Marketing told me, "We have lots of repeat guests at our Soneva resorts and many have expressed interest in becoming owners or part owners so they can bring their families here throughout the year."

The villas come with four or six bedrooms so there is plenty of room for your suddenly-eager-to-visit friends to stay. Lynn Villadolid, the senior sales director who runs Six Senses Private Residences told me that the resort was going for a real "Robinson Crusoe" feel. This means ocean views, lots of decking and a balance between indoor and outdoor space. Living spaces are connected by walkways through lush gardens. All the plots are huge, with a minimum of 1,275 square metres.

But at the same time it's very private, you can walk round without worrying about anyone seeing you, except the staff of course. Privacy is what attracts many of Soneva's usual clients who include film stars, VIPs and CEOs. Villas all come with private pools, naturally, (Robinson Crusoe never had one of those) with a waterslide for the kids, however old they are.

Being homes, rather than mere luxury resort villas, the private residences also boast a kitchen, gym, steam rooms, butler's quarters and state-of-the-art entertainment equipment. There is also a boat on standby, strictly for residence owners so you can tour the stunning national marine park and perhaps do some diving.

It's the sheer size of the plots at Soneva Kiri that make them stand out. You could not find plots of this size on more established islands like Samui or Phuket, and with property prices in Thailand rising they offer a good investment for cash-savvy millionaires.

But it's the luxury lifestyle offered by Soneva Kiri that we are interested in here and that starts before you even arrive. The resort's personal plane, a cozily fitted-out eight-seater Cessna Grand Caravan, is on hand at Don Muang to whisk you away to paradise and its use is included in the price. On route to Soneva's private landing strip you'll be pampered by your very own Mr and Mrs Friday who will meet you at the airport to see your needs are met. Crusoe only had the monolingual Mr Friday and he wasn't so good at cleaning or rustling up five-star luxury dinners. The butler will prepare for your arrival and clean up when you have left, what more could you ask for?

Well, there are all the services of the resort to take advantage of, at a discount of course, as if you need one. So as well as the usual facilities like the spa and housekeeping, you can spend evenings under the stars watching classic movies in Cinema Paradiso, with popcorn laid on. There are also innovative five-star dining experiences if you don't want to cook in the villa, including a chance to eat in the treetops while the food and waiter are raised to your level on ropes.

Of course, millionaire's offspring expect the best and at Soneva Kiri they get it too in the form of a wonderful kid's den, designed by kids for kids. "It's their own fantasy world shaped like a giant stingray." Lynn told me. "A platform comes down for children to enter and they have their own entrance code to keep the adults out. It's magnificent."

If you are spending time in your other homes around the world, your Soneva Kiri residence can actually make money for you if you opt into the villa rental programme. During the periods you are not there, guests at the resort can rent your villa which can command as much as US\$5,000 a night – not a figure to be sniffed at, even by people who use money to wipe their noses. There is a service charge for cleaning and maintenance but you still make a good return. You can even choose what rooms in your villa you want to make available if you'd rather that certain areas remain sacrosanct.

In further proof that the rich don't quite have to play by the same rules of the rest of us, foreigners can lease the land surrounding their villa via three lease extensions of 30 years each meaning a total of up to 120 years, the longest in Thailand. So the long-lived should benefit. Thai clients, of course, can buy their plots outright.

So, what does it cost to live in this sort of splendour? Well, depending on the size of the villa you choose you can expect to shell out up to 7.5 million dollars with a further 2,000 dollars a month for general maintenance fees. It's a damn sight more than Robinson Crusoe paid for his island abode, but then he did spend his days gazing at the horizon wishing to return to England. We doubt residents of Soneva Kiri will ever want to leave.

Soneva Kiri Resort will be opening at the end of the year, the majority of the private residences will be complete with 18 months.

185 RAJADAMRI: ROOMS WITH A VIEW

Unless you've been living under a rock in a remote jungle cave for the past five years you'll already be familiar with luxury property developers Raimon Land. In fact, chances are the company has probably already bought your jungle cave, turned it into "a back to nature retreat with forest views and natural furnishings" and sold it to a millionaire.

Very often the first we hear of a new property in Bangkok is after it has been built. Not so with Raimon Land, whose creative and aggressive brand awareness campaigns rival those in London and New York, where luxury properties can fetch ridiculous prices. With a massive billboard presence all over the capital, a reputation for hosting extravagant and highly original parties (with big-name DJs like Tiësto), a social corporate responsibility programme (sponsoring everything from clean drinking water in local schools to baby elephants in the north), a socially irresponsible programme sponsoring terrible reality TV shows like Superstar and an award-winning website, the company has successfully embedded its brand deep within the capital's consciousness.

Since changing management in 2002, Raimon Land has completed six

new properties in 6 billion baht, but their portfolio is

"The core Raimon Land, with a major project in B"

And with site along Rajadam Crown Property E "It's got that once to sell," says Henr

And unsu erty's 190 units will 300,000 baht per se swanky address and

"Basically park and the Royal planes – one looking to further ma heights and all un with a view indee the city, so beloved sanct, ensuring yo

Scheduled including 115 square room units all the w Higher than all the 360° panoramas an

But even in the development a lot of interest "Probably more fr a mix of wealthy fa

There ha me a name, though lot of demand for prestigious location and on the BTS, a

But 185 R jadamri. Starwood & Henri doesn't see it leasehold project," I it's a bit of a difference mium for the brand will give the new res

PARAD

Of all the luxury p lavish associations automatically draw complexities of everyday kingdom. Owning