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MALAYSIA

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MAY 2018



ROCK STAR

HOW CHIN HIN GROUP'S
CHIAU HAW CHOON
BECAME MALAYSIA'S
EY ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR

BY DESIGN

SHAPE OF THINGS
THE PROPERTY
OUTLOOK ACCORDING
TO FOUR DEVELOPERS

INSIDE JOB
SOPHIE MIR'S
SOPHISTICATED
INTERIORS

ULTRA VOX
HIGH FIDELITY LIKE
YOU'VE NEVER HEARD
BEFORE



March 2018

LIFESTYLE

CROWNING GLORY

Indulgence hits new heights at the über luxurious private retreat of Layan Residences by Anantara. Christy Yoong gets thoroughly spoilt while living the high life in Phuket.

PHOTOS: LAYAN RESIDENCES BY ANANTARA IN A SHUTTLE SERVICE

The backoning Andaman Sea from your master bedroom in Layan Residences by Anantara.





I'm in Phuket and I have a guest coming for dinner. Staff busy themselves at the barbecue pit as my butler make sure that the table settings at the outdoor dining *sala* are just right. I wandered over to offer some help but, after being asked about my preference for wine, my butler shooed away. "Go relax," she said. "Everything's taken care of."

Indeed they are. I'm staying at Layan Residences by Anantara and my villa, *Komala*, consists of five bedrooms, as well as separate living, dining and TV rooms - all to myself. I haven't seen the butler's quarters yet or even checked out the kitchen downstairs, but I've raided the fridges and cookie jars, and made a close study of the toilet amenities (I've made lavish use of the wonderful jasmine-scented body lotion).

That can be the problem with choice, see - too many and you really can't decide. I end up back in the 22m Infinity pool, enjoying the breeze



and a bottle of the local beer, while watching fluffy, white clouds chase each other across the brilliantly blue sky. Life is extravagantly good at Layan Residences.

LAND AND SEA

The golden rule about property, or so people in the know say, is location, location, location. If that's the yardstick, Layan Residences' has it - in spades. These 15 private residences are perched on a hill overlooking Layan Bay in the serene and exclusive north-west part of Phuket, within the pristine Srinat National Park. It's only 20 minutes from the Phuket

International Airport and in easy reach of the island's bustling southern beaches, famed for their vibrant nightlife, championship golf courses and fun leisure attractions.

These resort-style residences weave through a pristine and lush canopy of rainforest; here, the buildings complement, rather than diminished, their green surroundings. All 15 individually designed villas are double-storied, ranging in size from 1,695 to 3,220 sq m, and offer anything from two to eight bedrooms each. They all feature two expansive master bedrooms on the second floor, where the infinity pool, outdoor

01 Sumptuous luxury awaits at Layan Residences by Anantara.

02 Each residence comes with a private dining room.

03 Enjoy spectacular seclusion at your private villa.



dining sala, and separate living and dining rooms are also located, all with unobstructed, 180° views of Layan Bay and, beyond the small, forested, full moon-shaped island of Koh Kata at the mouth of the bay, the beckoning Andaman Sea.

The sweeping verandas, high ceilings and floor-to-ceiling windows emphasise the freely flowing space and graceful lines, enhanced by details that range from intricately carved ceiling lattices, carpet patterns, furniture curves and colourful hand woven rugs, to distinctive artefacts and antiques. Here, the instinct is to luxuriate – to indulge in a barbecue, lounge by the pool's massage jets, share a meal in the outdoor dining sala (the sunken air-con vents behind the low seats are a stroke of genius in this tropical weather) or, simply, revel in the vistas before you.

Downstairs is more functional, where additional bedrooms, studies, media and staff rooms, kitchens, and additional luxuries like gyms and spas (available only in certain residences) are situated. The rooftops are flat, maximising the amount of space that residents can enjoy. Nothing goes to waste in Anantara's efforts to ensure your comfort here.

MASTERPIECE OF DESIGN

Your Layan Residences experience begins when you touch down at the airport, where you can enjoy



a seamless VIP journey to your villa. You will be greeted as you disembark the plane, escorted through immigration through the diplomatic channel, helped with your baggage claim and customs clearance, before being whisked to your waiting limousine that will take you directly to your residence, where you'll be met by your butler (or butlers, depending on the size of your party). He or she will remain with you throughout your stay, helping you plan activities or excursions, and arrange meals, and generally see to your every need.

The first "wow" moment (and there are many) during your time at Layan Residences happens when you step through the antique Burmese teak front doors: the

panoramic views that welcome you are, literally, breathtaking. Then, as you venture further, you'll notice the details of the architecture and the intricacy of the design and décor, and begin to appreciate what is one of the crowning achievements of the late Indonesian design guru, Jaya Ibrahim, for whom Layan Residences was his last masterpiece. Sumptuously furnished living and dining rooms flank the entrance that flows to the infinity pool hanging over the edge of the hill, while deck chairs and timbered columns punctuate the long veranda and sun deck.

The two master bedrooms are on either side of the residence. Again, space is abundant, accentuated by the dramatic double-height ceilings



04 The 22m infinity pool is perched on the hillside.

05 Arrange for a private spa session at your villa.

and floor-to-ceiling windows – perfect for enjoying the magnificent views from the king-sized beds at the centre of this sanctuary of privacy. En-suite bathrooms, completed with a tub that looks as if it's built for more than two, enjoy the same heights – the effect this has on the rain shower is, I assure you, a life-changing experience. Premium bath fixtures are completed by a range of Elemis' lush amenities.

SIT BACK AND RELAX

After you've settled into your room (check-ins are done in-villa), the only thing left for you to do is decide how much you actually want to do. The residences are self-sufficient enough that there is no need for you to

venture out at all. Anything, from spa and Thai hermit exercises, to poolside soirées (in my case, a barbecue) and fine dining, can be arranged and held in the seclusion of your residence. The kitchens are fully equipped and there is more than ample space to hold the most sybaritic of parties. The fridges in the dining room are amply stocked with wine – do try those from Anantara's own label, made from grapes harvested in Hua Hin and exclusive to its resorts around the world – and spirits of all kinds (tip: the local small-batch, handcrafted Full Moon beer is perfect for a hot day).

Of course, if you feel the need for a change of scenery, unlike as that may seem, just venture downhill – buggies are available

in each residence's carport, but do leave all the driving to your butler – to Anantara Layan Resort, where you can avail yourself to the full range of its myriad activities. Top of the list is, probably, the award-winning Anantara Spa, which offers rejuvenating wellness and pampering in seven luxury treatment rooms. Try the unique Layan Orchid Signature Ritual, which begins with a milky bath laced with fresh purple royal orchids as you enjoy a private tea service, followed by a Thai herbal compress treatment.

While you certainly can have all your meals in-villa – the panorama alone from the outdoor dining sala is stunning, particular at sunset – it's worthwhile to at least make time for

06 Floor-to-ceiling windows afford unobstructed views of Layan Bay.



07 Meals can also be had at the adjoining Anantara Layan Resort.

08 All the amenities at Anantara Layan Resort are available to guests at Layan Residences.

dinner at Dee Plee, which serves the very best of Thai cuisine. Start off with an exotic cocktail at the bar before taking a culinary tour of the kingdom's distinctive regional specialties. The all-day Sala Layan is on the beachfront, and serves a predominantly Italian menu. The wine collection here is one of the best in Phuket, and well worth exploring with the help of Anantara's wine gurus. Breeze bar and the attendant Sunshine butlers, with their skewers of fresh fruit and cooling face towels, make the resort's pool the perfect draw for sun worshippers.

If it's activities you're after, do know that Anantara Layan Resort boasts its very own Muay Thai ring. Sign up for lessons with the professional instructor who'll give you an insight into the history and techniques of the 'art of eight limbs'. Less demanding is Anantara's Spice Spoons experience at Dee Plee, where you can pick up a few recipes you'll be able to reproduce at home easily. There's a gamut of watersports - from kayaking, canoeing and surfboarding, to snorkelling, windsurfing and sailing.



You can also charter the resort's luxurious 90ft Sunseeker yacht, *Major Affair*, for a cruise of Phuket's waters, and explore its offshore islands and secluded beaches. Choose either day or overnight cruises, and sail to the isolated Coral Island, Phi Phi Island and its film-famous Maya Bay from *The Beach*, the beautiful ecosystem of the Similan Islands and the dramatic limestone spire of James Bond Island (Khao Phing Kan, which appeared in 007's *The Man with the Golden Gun*, see sidebar). Divers will be thrilled by the Andaman's underwater treasures of the colourful snorkelling paradise of the triplet Khai Islands - Khai Nok, Khai Nai and Khai Nui are located 10km east of Phuket in the Ao Phang Nga National Park.

Land-bound exploits can be had on the greens of Blue Canyon Country Club, just 10 minutes from the resort. Here, on its rolling 720ac, are two award-winning 18-hole golf courses that will challenge the

most avid of golfers. Other excellent courses, including the much-praised Red Mountain Golf Club, are located a little further away. For non-golfers, a visit to Phuket City - one of the oldest in Thailand - is both a cultural and culinary delight, with its historic district, lined with Sino-Portuguese mansions that reflect the island's colourful past, and Thai and Chinese temples, and the bustling and bountiful markets.

BAREFOOT LUXURY

My last night at Layan Residences was capped by a dramatic thunderstorm that brightened the horizon with its flashes of lightning. I cocooned myself in my room, curtains opened, as furious rain beat against the windows. The barbecue dinner earlier was a great success - the food both delicious and plentiful, and the company a distinct pleasure. Earlier in the day, I had my first Muay Thai lesson, which didn't go

as planned - convinced I was going to have a heart attack half way through, I spent the rest of the time distracting myself from the aches with a fascinating conversation with the instructor. My butler found it most amusing.

Layan Residences by Anantara is everything a dream property should be (while the villas are available for nightly stays, they are also available for purchase) - amazing location, beautifully designed and splendidly outfitted. The villas wear their luxury lightly, however, exuding a cosy homeliness that belies its plush accoutrements - it took me no time at all before I started wandering around barefoot. What also made staying there exceptional was the wonderfully gracious people who help run the place. Service was impeccable in the typical Anantara way, soothing away all cares with deft touches that make you feel special, a word that precisely sums up my time at Layan Residences. Another apt word, considering the number of times I went 'wow', can only be 'magical'. phuket-residences.anantara.com

GOLDEN TIME

An experience James Bond would approve of.



While all the villas at Layan Residences by Anantara are the epitome of luxury, Villa Similan is a world apart. The largest of the resort's 15 ultra-splendid residences, the lavish eight-bedroom villa oozes suave sophistication, and comes with live-in butlers and on-call private chef and spa therapist. Its stunning views and extravagant living quarters, which includes a gym, private spa, wine room and a 007-esque 'man cave' complete with leather sofas and an antique carved billiards table, makes Villa Similan the perfect setting for the no-expense-spared 'Golden Gun' experience.

Inspired by the James Bond movie, *The Man with the Golden Gun*, the three-night experience kicks off in style on-board a private jet from Bangkok to Phuket, where guests will be whisked by chauffeur-driven limousine to Villa Similan. There, look forward to a luxurious cruise around Phang Nga Bay, where *The Man with the Golden Gun* was filmed, while enjoying free-flowing Krug champagne and a gourmet barbecue prepared by a private chef. Look out for James Bond Island (Khao Phing Kan), which played a starring role in the movie as Scaramanga's hideout.

Back at the villa, tone up with private Muay Thai boxing lessons, before taking in views over the Andaman Sea with 007's signature dry Martini cocktails (shaken, not stirred, of course) and heading to the cinema room for a private viewing of James-Bond films.

Finally, at a wine tasting with Anantara's wine guru and specially prepared dinner on the terrace, guests have the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to handle the fabled Golden Gun used by the film's villain Francisco Scaramanga, which famously consisted of innocuous golden objects - a cufflink (trigger), gas lighter (bullet chamber), fountain pen (barrel) and cigarette case (handle).