

# Weekend

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**GEORGE BAMFORD,  
REINVENTING  
LUXURY WATCHES**

FOOD  
**THE MAN WHO  
CREATED LO-HEI**



## HOLIDAY HOMES

Why we love them and where to snag one

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# LUXE FOR SALE OR RENT

The Layan Residences by Anantara consists of 15 super-luxury holiday homes that come with a live-in butler to cater to your every need

JAIME EE

IN A VILLA PERCHED HIGH on a hill overlooking Layan Bay in Phuket, lives the man with the golden gun. Yes we're talking about that Golden Gun, but not James Bond nor the late Roger Moore, who played the character in the 1974 movie shot on nearby Phang Nga Bay. We're talking about hotel tycoon William Heinecke, who bought the iconic prop and now displays it in the "man cave" of Villa Similan – the most luxurious of 15 luxury villas that make up the Layan Residences by Anantara.

The first residential development by Heinecke's Anantara hotel and resort chain is designed to out-luxe all the other high-end properties that have already proliferated in Phuket. While all of them fall into the "super-luxury holiday homes for the stupendously rich" bracket, Heinecke gets the pick of the crop with Villa Similan, which has the best location and is the largest of the lot. He and his family spend almost every weekend in this over-the-top, no expenses-spared getaway that boasts a fully equipped spa created by the royal couple of spa design Hans and Farida Brouwer – a surrealistic space that deserves its own reality show. There's also a movie theatre, where you can binge-watch the Bond series before adjourning to the "man cave", with its comprehensively stocked wine cellar encased in glass, and a host of boy's toys and memorabilia including a heavy Thai antique carved billiards table.

While Heinecke owns the villa, he enjoys the double advantage of making his investment work for him by renting it out to short-term visitors who want the luxury without the commitment. Most of the 15 residences – ranging from two to seven bedrooms - have also been sold since their 2016 completion. They are managed by the adjacent Anantara Layan Resort so each villa enjoys the same kind of resort services, including a live-in butler to take care of all your needs from firing up a family barbecue to serving sunset cocktails and even doing the *mise en place* if you feel like cooking your own spread in the villa's large stainless steel kitchen that makes service apartment kitchenettes look like a boy scout's campsite. Alternatively, dinner at the Layan Resorts' Dee Pla Restaurant

is just a quick buggy ride away.

The draw of Layan Residences is that it was the last project of the late Indonesian interior design guru Jaya Ibrahim, who eschewed the classic Thai aesthetic followed closely by the nearby Aman villas, and introduced a contemporary look with traditional touches.

Think accents such as carved, claw-foot beds, latticed ceilings and Burmese teak doors. Built by Habita Architects, each villa is a sprawling space with free standing "salas" that house separate dining, living and master bedrooms, while cleverly hidden staircases lead you to the other bedrooms, massage suite and gym. A lovely roof terrace gives you a bird's eye view of Layan Bay and the tiny island Koh Kata in the distance – a perfect spot for sunset-gazing. From this vantage point you can see how the houses are carefully built into the forest so you're surrounded by natural greenery at every angle.

There are five remaining villas for sale from US\$8 million upwards, with another 16 to be launched soon under the Avadina brand. The five-bedroom Villa Chalong that we stay in is priced at a cool S\$14 million for over 2000 sq m of space. If you're looking at what kind of ROI you can get from renting it out, our live-in butler tells us how a Russian family with three babies stayed in the villa for 21 days and spent 10 million baht (about S\$400,000), requiring the services of three butlers. Rental rates start from 80,000 baht for a two-bedroom residence in the low season, to 225,000 baht for a seven roomer. The rate can easily be shared by several couples, which averages out to under S\$1,500 a room, with full butler service thrown in.

Of course, if you want to make a big production of it, you and your gang can splurge on a stay at Villa Similan. Who knows, you might get a surprise visit by the man with the golden gun – and a Midas touch.

The writer was a guest of Layan Residences Phuket. For more information, go to <https://phuket-residences.anantara.com/>

(1) Villa Similan bedroom.  
(2) View of residences.  
(3) Outdoor area.