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# Soneva's Thailand debut

Six Senses will roll out its first Soneva property outside of the Maldives in April, featuring the firm's first residential development in addition to villas

Six Senses Resorts & Spas is getting ready to open its first Soneva-branded property outside of the Maldives.

The Bangkok-based company, which has made a name for itself with its luxurious but environmentally-friendly properties in Asia, the Indian Ocean and recently, in Oman's Zighy Bay, is building on the success of its flagship Soneva Fushi and Soneva Gili resorts by opening a third 'Soneva' in Thailand.

Located on Koh Kood, a remote island situated off the east coast of Thailand (south of Koh Chang), Soneva Kiri by Six Senses comprises 42 pool villas, including beach and hilltop reserves, beach and hilltop retreats and an Eco Suite, as well as 20 Private Residences, marking the first time Six Senses has branched out into residential development.

The company believes that given its high repeat business rate for the Soneva properties — around 60% — the residences at Soneva Kiri will attract many regulars.

"A number of buyers so far are repeaters," said Six Senses Private Residences director of sales & marketing Adam James Taugwalder.

"We are looking for buyers who understand the concept [of Six Senses] and want a long-term investment. We are not looking for short-term buyers who flip them quickly to make a profit."

The asking price for the residences at Soneva Kiri ranges from US \$4.5 million to \$7.5 million. Each residence occupies a living area of up to 1600m<sup>2</sup> and has its own two acres of land, nestled within the 150 acres of lush tropical rainforest.

Purchasers can choose between four- and six-bedroom villas either on the beach front or the hill top and each with panoramic views of the Gulf of Thailand.

Owners also get access to a luxury private boat, a 20% discount on all resort services and facilities, as well as membership of the Soneva Club — an exclusive global private members-only club. The resort's private eight-seater Cessna Grand Caravan will transport guests from Bangkok to their island home. There are plans in the pipeline to buy bigger aircraft that will be able to fly both guests and owners from other locations around Asia such as Hong Kong.

Villa owners will be "buying into a lifestyle", epitomised by Six Senses' 'no news, no shoes' philosophy, explained Taugwalder.



"We also have a new tagline — 'Slow life' — which is about being sustainable, local, organic, wholesome, learning and innovative," he said.

"Our guests and owners are successful and busy people so when they spend time with us we take them back to the slow life."

Taugwalder also noted that Six Senses would run a Villa Rental Programme for owners who wished to rent out their properties.

"It's tailored to their needs so they can spend anything from one week to 11 months in the residences," he said.

Both owners and guests at Soneva Kiri by Six Senses have access to a number of facilities including a Six Senses Spa with 11 double treatment rooms and four rooms with a private relaxation area; 'The Den' offering "creative experiences" for kids; and a number of F&B offerings including an exclusive treetop dining experience.

Each villa has its own butler and guests are also offered a wide range of activities from wellness workshops and lifestyle programmes to water sports, sailing, gardening, astronomy and cooking classes and mountain biking. The resort will have its own private airstrip and is around one hour by Six Senses' private plane from Bangkok. Guests are transferred by speedboat from the airstrip to arrivals pier at the resort.

Taugwalder said once open, Soneva Kiri would be the "best resort in Asia", not just because of its "five-star facilities" but due to its "software".

"We have four to five hosts (staff) per guest and it's the way we train our butlers and chefs — and retain them," he said.

"This is what makes us stand apart from the other five-star plus resorts."



Villadolid: buyers are looking for location.

## CRUNCH PROOF?

Six Senses Resorts & Spas is confident demand will be strong for its guest villas and private residences at Soneva Kiri despite global economic woes.

The company's senior director for Six Senses Private Residences, Lynn Villadolid said clients at the very top were somewhat protected from the current credit crunch.

"The interest continues from very high-end earners because people with money make money because they understand how to make money," she said. "People are more cautious, but we are closing sales — it just takes a little bit longer than usual."

Villadolid said most buyers were making long-term commitments to Soneva Kiri and that return on investment was not their key concern.

"There are hundreds of projects on the go where you can show buyers return on investment, but that's not what they are after," she said.

"They are looking for the lifestyle and the location that only we can offer."