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A Palace In THE HILLS

Sailing among Indonesia's jewel
islands on the Dumai Bara.

Set amidst a protected National Park, the Anantara Layan Residences, Phuket, are a new benchmark in luxury. Each villa ranges from 1695sq m to over 3000sq m, each has a 180-degree view of the Andaman bay below, a dedicated residential butler who can double up as chef, and a 21m infinity pool that you won't want to leave. Ruchira Bose pretends to be a billionaire for a few days and definitely likes the life.



W

Woah! There is an involuntary and very audible gasp when you step out of the car and stand before the grand doors to your Anantara Layan Residence. Even the most jaded luxury traveller will stop for a few seconds marveling at the view through those doors. You'll pause the first time, the second and even possibly the 50th time. It's a jewel like view that is addictive.

You see your infinity pool stretch over a length of 21 meters with a 180 degree view of the Andaman Sea down below. The space is expansive; the flow, elegant. Purple chaises and Frangipani trees dot the front edge. The soft fragrance from the blossoms curl through the air and tease your mind the way only beautiful things do. On the left end of the pool is a tree with canopy hanging over it, a great place to settle in the water with a drink on the ledge. Next to this is a beautiful sala with sunken dining. In the evening the area transforms when lamps flame up on the outer edge of the pool, and the sala is lit softly. Whether you linger after dark in the water or are dining in the sala, the night sky is spectacular. From fireflies in the green around you, village lights in the distance near the shores, to the stars in the inky blue sky above you, there are twinkling lights all around.

As you step into this private tropical palace-like space, you'll find three glass pavilions rising tall on either side of you. Each room here is a separate high-ceiling pavilion-like structure. With three sides that have floor-to-ceiling glass, so that you miss no part of the view of the ocean. The three bedroom villas have rooms below as well, also with stunning views.

When you arrive, you're ushered by your private butler into the living-room pavilion, where check-in formalities are completed. By the way, your butler has a separate staff quarter within the Residence, so he's accessible 24x7. Something family travellers will be really appreciative of.

The Residences can be called villas, but the word doesn't begin to convey the scale or the level of luxury, and besides, 'villas' is a term already used to describe the resort's freestanding bungalows that dot the rest of the property below. Those are lovely, too, but clearly far from the level of luxury in the residences. Trailing up a hillside at the top of the property, the residences made their debut in December 2015 with three to eight bedrooms apiece ranging from 1,695 to 3,220 square metres. Even the smallest sleeps nine (and goes for around \$3,500 per night) and has bedrooms



At A Glance

High above one of the best beaches in Phuket,

Thailand, sit 15 sky palaces. Priced from about US\$8 million, the over 18,000-square-foot homes are both an extension of Anantara

Layan Phuket Resort and self-sufficient compounds all their own. Owners at the Residences by Anantara have access to resort activities like cooking, yoga, and Muay Thai kickboxing classes. They can also order food from any of Anantara's restaurants and visit its swimming pool on Layan Beach, which is a short golf-cart ride away.

Although wanting to put your feet in the sand may be the only reason to leave your private swimming pool. An infinity-edge lap pool seemingly hangs over the edge of each residence—perched on stilts like a treehouse. The hillside homes look out to panoramic views of the Andaman Sea. Just behind the pool deck are the main living spaces, flanked by the master bedroom and an open-air dining pavilion. On the lower level are secondary bedrooms, an office, and a private spa room with a skylight to the pool above. Choose among layouts with three to eight bedrooms, all equipped with motorized treatments for floor-to-ceiling windows and marble bathrooms with Toto Washlet toilets. Owners can keep the homes for private use or they can return them to the hotel rental pool, where they rent for about \$3,000 per night. The drive to the homes, located on the island's west coast, is about 20 minutes from Phuket International Airport.



Wind surfing in the cove is one of the many watersports you can do here.



DINING BY DESIGN

ANANTARA'S SIGNATURE PRIVATE DINING CONCEPT IS VERY IMPRESSIVE AND UNDENIABLY ROMANTIC. THE PLATING, QUALITY OF PRODUCE, CONCEPT OF DISHES AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE CAN MATCH ANY POSH RESTAURANT IN A WORLD CAPITAL. WE WOULD HIGHLY RECOMMEND THE SPECTACULAR BBQ THEY CAN SET UP FOR YOU ON THE BEACH OR IN THE SALA. BOTH ARE SETTINGS SO MAGICAL THAT YOU'RE GUARANTEED ONE OF THOSE MEMORABLE EVENINGS FILLED WITH INCREDIBLE FOOD, CONVERSATION, SONG AND LAUGHTER.



A Breakfast Apothecary

One of the most delightful hours at Anantara Layan, is breakfast time. Walk in to a cosy cave that looks partly like an Apothecary and partly like a lovely traditional kitchen in someone's house. There's an amazing 'Vitality Corner' filled with superfoods such as buckwheat, cocoa nibs, bee pollen, chia seeds and spirulina shots. Discover birdcages with freshly baked baguettes, ciabattas, cronuts, and pretzels. The housemade compotes are served in tiny little mason jars. In the Asian section, there's fresh bak kut teh soup, noodle stations, congee, tea boiled eggs and a complete Japanese spread too. Breakfast is not only a visually abundant experience, but a delight for any discerning palate. Props and accents like little apothecary-style weighing scales and measuring spoons intersperse jars, tiny glass bottles, and corked jars full of yoghurt and muesli that all add to the atmosphere.

Clockwise: Eggs Ben and fresh juice blends or a Champagne breakfast in the beachfront outdoor seating at Sala Layan. Inside, hidden away from the main breakfast area, is an atmospherically lit wine room that becomes the cheese and charcuterie lover's dream space in the morning. An absolutely brilliant collection of homemade fresh cheeses sit amidst smoked salmon, peppered mackerel, Parma ham, Coppa and more.





A bedroom pavilion
in the Residence.



**YOU'LL PAUSE THE FIRST TIME, THE SECOND AND
EVEN POSSIBLY THE 50TH TIME. IT'S A JEWEL LIKE
VIEW THAT IS ADDICTIVE.**



A DATE WITH THE WINE GURU

ALLOW THE RESIDENT WINE GURU TO SHARE THEIR PASSION FOR WINE AND ENHANCE YOUR DINING EXPERIENCE. WHETHER YOU'RE A WINE CONNOISSEUR OR A NOVICE WITH AN APPETITE FOR KNOWLEDGE THE RESIDENT WINE GURU IS A DELIGHT TO CHAT WITH, AND A FOUNTAIN OF KNOWLEDGE. LET HIM TAKE YOU ON A TOUR OF WINES ACROSS THE WORLD, UNRAVELING THE SECRETS BEHIND WHAT MAKES A GREAT WINE AND DEFINITELY TRY HIS SUGGESTED FOOD PAIRINGS – SPECIALLY THE ASIAN DISHES HE MATCHES. THE CHEESE AND NIBBLES SPREAD SERVED WITH THE WINES ARE IN THEMSELVES A GOURMET HOLIDAY FOR THE PALATE.



Spa Above the Waves

COME FOR THE INDULGENCE, LINGER FOR THE VIEWS.

A sanctuary within a sanctuary, Anantara's spa is perched in one corner of the hillside with more views of the Layan bay. And although you have to put your face down and enjoy treatments, the post treatment cup of ginger tea by far is one of the best experiences in the world. You sit in a bay window holding the warm cup in your hands, and the tree canopy spreads beneath you like a carpet extending into the blue of the Indian Ocean. The signature treatments carry the Anantara team's prowess in healing and rejuvenation. Put your wellbeing and beauty desires in the hands of therapists who are trained to the highest international standards. Surrender to healing massages from ancient Asian holistic tradition and revered Western techniques as you step into the tranquil oasis of Anantara Spa surrounded by a paradise natural setting.

in separate pavilions, plus shared pavilions for dining, living, entertainment and work.

Anantara's aim was to dramatically upgrade 'the modest backpacker-destination' image that Phuket has come to have over the years. The scale of the residences is epic, the design is wow and their technology, from the massive, heavy curtains that open and close at the touch of a button to the Toto Washlet toilets, is top of the line. The residences are meant to be private homes that owners have a choice to place in the overall inventory of the resort when they aren't using it themselves. They are designed and positioned perfectly for those who vacation with family and friends.

The design is particularly noteworthy. It's the last project that the late Jaya Ibrahim of Jaya International worked on himself. The designer blended classic Asian influences with a modern layout and today's luxury standards. The result amplifies the tranquility and beauty of the region.

The resort is situated amidst the canopy of the surrounding rainforest, perched on a hilly terrain above a quiet beach. To blend the residences and villas with their surroundings, Ibrahim used indigenous and natural materials such as Thai travertine, locally-sourced wood and Terrazzo flooring. The residences feature two-tiered flat roofs with indented corners, a modern twist on the traditional Thai design element that also serves to enhance views.

The interiors are calm and comfortable, allowing an automatic mental transition from a busy, urban life to peace and quiet. Features and doors are

aligned to emanate a sense of balance and security, and the furniture layouts in each room are focused on the view outside. The sense of place is subtly enhanced with the choice of materials, like wood and stone with natural instead of highly glossed finishes. Local culture is reflected through distinct design elements, such as the intricately carved ceiling lattice, the carpet pattern and the curves of the furniture.

All of the décor elements were specifically designed or handpicked by Jaya Ibrahim himself as a complement to the cultural richness of the location. The interior is warm, welcoming and luxurious, and emanates a distinctly authentic aura. A rustic bronze lamp stand with three tiers and indented corners is an inverse reflection of the building itself. Colourful hand woven rugs were created using a combination of silk and wool. Additional artifacts and antiques found throughout the residences were curated personally by the architect to embellish the surroundings.

This is the first set of branded residences from Anantara, and the location is very special. Layan Beach is on the northwest coast of Phuket, and is a beautiful stretch that curves along like a private cove. During the season, Anantara staff organizes an open-air theatre in the garden for guests who love watching movies. Expect a gentle tropical evening, relaxing on bean bags, twiddling your toes in cool grass, snacking on pop corn, and watching your favourite feature film. For children, there's a host of games and activities ranging from the usual beach and water sports to indoor fun for younger kids. ■



Master Class

A cooking class at Anantara Layan can be as simple or as complex, depending on your skill level. The journey begins early in the morning with a chef-guided tour of the market to select fresh ingredients and sample a popular local snack. Then cook your favourite dishes in a step by step class and savour each delicious recipe. Learn about Thai cuisine's cultural significance and health benefits, indigenous ingredients and cooking equipment, as well as convenient replacements to use at home. The best part of this master chef class is the location – a set up done specially for you at Dee Plee, Anantara's Thai restaurant on the cliff side with wow views of the Andaman Sea.