

CONCIERGE

What's hot around the region



LAST RESORTS

Thailand must have more five star resorts per population than any other non-island nation. Yet in this resort-clad country, the builders continue to erect luxury tourist retreats convinced that Thailand's burgeoning tourism boom has no end in sight. Increasingly, however, these resorts far from being run-of-the-mill are designed with a difference. We pick five of the best.

The Zign Hotel (above)

Opened: January 2008

Location: Wongprachan Beach, Pattaya

Concept: Designed with the idea that all you need is art, The Zign Hotel blends artistic culture from around the world and intends to be the opposite of the homogenous mass of business hotels which tend to look the same the world over. With three basic design concepts to choose from (flint, terra and wicker) each of the rooms and villas nods its head to these materials whilst maintaining the standard expected in a five star hotel. Overall, the design

is crisp and has a Scandinavian-basis with bold lines and angular furnishings.

Pay: From USD 200 per night.

www.thezignhotel.com

Kirikayan

Opening: May 2008

Location: Located away from the Ibiza-style crush that has become synonymous with Koh Samui, Kirikayan is, for the moment at least, on one of the less populous beaches of this idyllic island.

Concept: On what can often seem an overcrowded island, the emphasis here is seclusion. With a large number of rooms coming with a private pool, you can keep yourself well hidden from the package tourists that roam the island in their droves. The design is sleek and traditional and gives the impression of being in a residential estate rather than a resort, which, frankly, is a refreshing change.

Pay: From USD 180 per night.

www.kirikayan.com

AKA Guti Resort

Opened: February 2008.

Location: Situated on the hillside of Hua Hin, this resort daringly ditches the traditional beachfront location of most of the city's resorts in an attempt to find a hideaway location in one of Thailand's more up-market regions.

Concept: Retreating from the world is central to the design of this resort, which has been created in the style of a Buddhist monastery. Taking their concept from the hill tribes of Tibet and the Yunnan province in China, the resort is intended to be a place of spiritual healing, in

which the mind can find relaxation as much as the body. The spa is, quite obviously, central to the resort's design concept.

Pay: From USD 500 per night.

www.akaresorts.com

Away Resort

Opened: October 2007

Location: Lying 82 kms off the coast of Trat on the island of Koh Kood, Away Resorts wins first prize for finding the most secluded place on which to build.

Concept: Away Resorts have done a pretty good job with a relatively difficult concept. With the idea of going both back to nature and distinctly up-market, accommodation ranges from tents to luxury villas, which quite honestly demonstrates the dichotomy of being all things to all people. However, the tents, while still being tents, are pretty solid safari tents and would suit anyone who loves camping. The huts are more reminiscent of the lower end accommodation that traditionally scored the Thai coast, having no air conditioning but being pretty nice Polynesian-style wooden affairs. The villas are standard luxury. On the down side, it doesn't have a pool.

Pay: From USD 52 per night.

www.awayresorts.com

Veranda: The High Resort (below)

Opened: February 2008

Location: A few miles outside Chiang Mai amid the lush and rolling mountainous landscape that frames the city.

Concept: A classic retreat, although Veranda is not far from the city, it is easy to feel a million miles from anyone else. Harnessing the Lanna-style design that originated in the region, Veranda incorporates huge wicker features and uses local wood to ensure that it blends with the unspoiled views from its enviable location.

Pay: From USD 188 per night.

www.verandaresortandspa.com/chaingmai

