

# ANDAMAN ABOUT LUXURY

Anantara Hotels, Resorts and Spas launches  
new exclusive residences in Layan, Phuket.

By HO YUN KUAN

The tourists were not out in force this side of the island, and there were no bars lining the streets. Our chauffeur-driven car drove past a few houses that gradually petered out as we approached a road that wound through unspoilt vegetation. It was Phuket like I had never seen before.

The road leads into Sirinath National Park, a 90sqkm marine sanctuary that hugs a 13km coastline. Twenty minutes after leaving Phuket International Airport, our car arrived at a secluded gate half hidden by foliage. Past it, I could see the grey-brown roofs of Anantara Layan Phuket Resort rising slightly above the tree line.

Built with conservation regulations in mind, the property was designed to blend into, rather than disrupt, the natural environment. Most of it is sprawled along the length of a pristine cove, which is bordered on one side by tropical shrubs.

Rising above this is the highlight of my trip: The Residences by Anantara, a cluster of 15 three- to five-bedroom villas available for short or long stays. For a starting price of US\$6 million (S\$8.5 million), property investors can get to call one of these homes, ranging 1,695sqm to over 2,600sqm, their own.

My buggy dropped me off in front of a discreet wooden door set into an





imposing wall. Walking through, I found myself on the pool deck of Residence 14, my home for the next two nights.

This level of the villa has been engineered to give maximum impact; its three wings flank the left and right, so the first thing one sees upon entering is the infinity pool overlooking the rest of the resort dotting the forest below and the Andaman Sea beyond.

To say it is excessive for one person to occupy an approximately 1,700sqm, three-bedroom abode alone would be an understatement. But excess is exactly what luxury is all about, and luxury is what Anantara sells. The three wings on the pool deck contain the living room, kitchen and dining areas, and the master bedroom. The living room is in the left-most wing. To the right

are two wings. One contains the kitchen and dining room, boasting a well-stocked wine fridge. The right-most wing is the master bedroom with a walk-in closet and a palatial



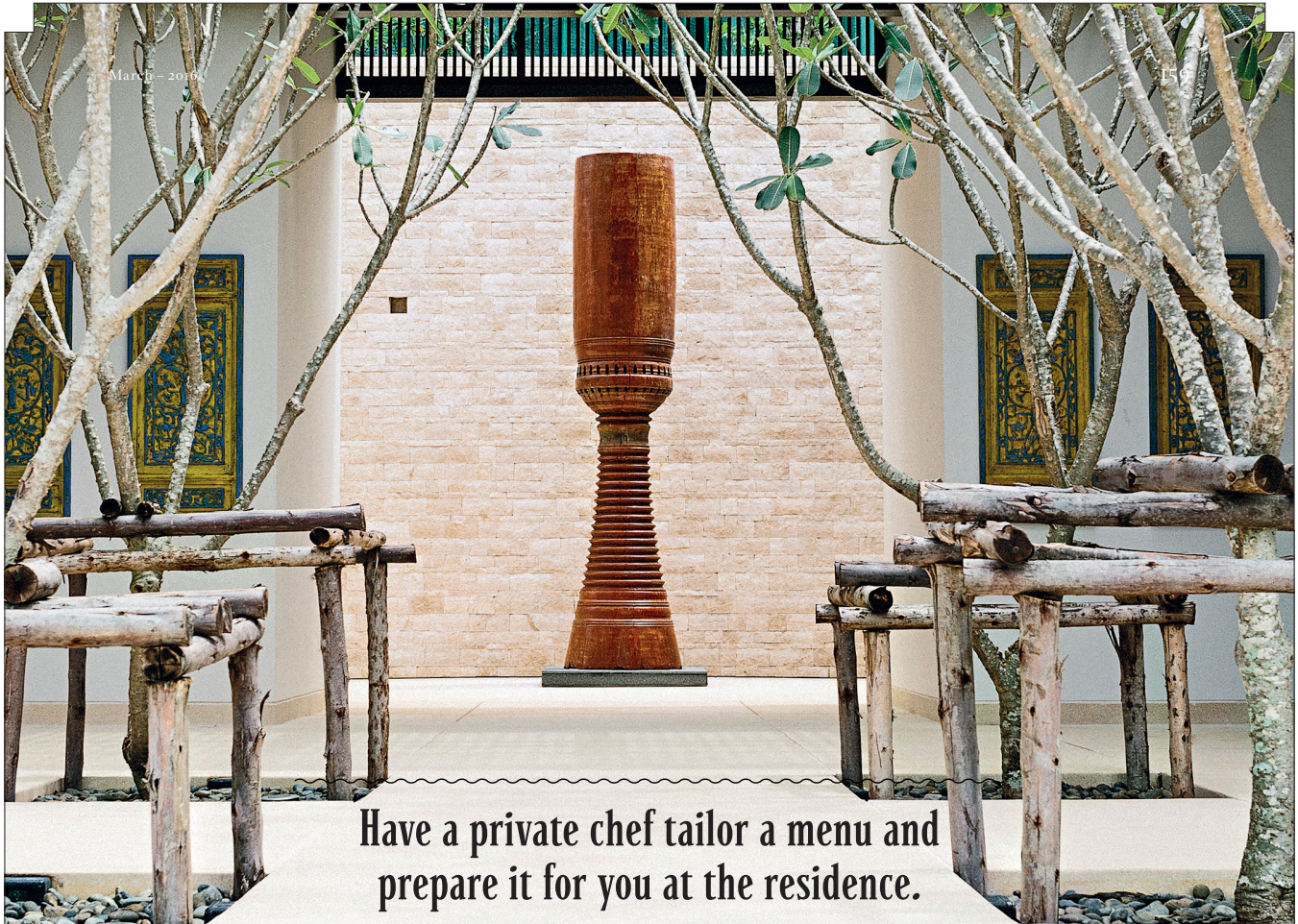
bathroom outfitted in full marble.

One level below the pool deck is a labyrinth of more rooms, including two bedrooms, an office and a private spa room with a skylight

that looks up into the glistening waters of the pool above.

Before my personal butler, who only wanted to be known as Donut, left me to take this all in, he passed me a grey gadget with a single button on it – the butler call button, of course. It soon proved itself to be hardly necessary. Just as my post-flight hunger pangs prompted me to contemplate the macarons in the living room, Donut appeared with a tray of delectable savoury nibbles – a quiche, tomato stuffed with feta cheese, quail's eggs topped with caviar, and more. Later that afternoon, when I felt a dip in the pool could be made better with a tall glass of something cold and refreshing, he once again appeared before I could call him with the button, offering to get me water, juice or a cocktail.

With such intuitive and



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personalised service, guests and owners of the residences may never have to lift a finger. It's possible that one may not even have to set foot out of the residence.

Want a meal? The butler can't cook, but this is where Dining by Design comes in. Have a private chef tailor a menu and prepare it for you at the residence – or your location of choice anywhere within the resort. My experience materialised as a surf and turf barbecue dinner with food grilled on the spot. I dined in the resort's wedding chapel by candlelight, with a view of the Andaman Sea to my right.

And ah, the advantage of having a private spa room! I had the Anantara Spa brought to me one night for the Slumber Guru treatment. This 70-minute experience started with a back, neck and shoulder massage. I then proceeded upstairs to the bathroom, where

This and facing pages: The Residences by Anantara's location within a national park means that no further developments have been planned for the foreseeable future, thus ensuring the continued preservation of the surrounding natural beauty.

I discovered a milk bath scattered with rose petals and a flask of hot chocolate and cookies on the edge of the tub.

There are, however, definitely things worth leaving the residence for: the wine tasting session, for one. Choose to savour eight wines (four whites and four reds) in a private room off Sala Layan, the resort's Mediterranean restaurant.

The resort also hosts an annual turtle release around March. A collaboration with the Mai Khao Marine Turtle Foundation, this event sees the release of one-year-old turtles that have been rescued and hatched in the Phuket Marine Biological Centre.

Last year's release saw 40 turtles making a dash for freedom into the sea, an unforgettable sight that brings to the fore Anantara's commitment to sustainable luxury.

[phuket-layan.anantara.com](http://phuket-layan.anantara.com)