

Pure Luxury for Scandinavians

The real estate tycoon from Norway, Arne Hvidsten, has a dream. He's building extraordinary holiday apartments at Jomtien Beach and wants it to be the most amazing holiday resort in Thailand. And on top of it he hopes it will become a luxury colony for Scandinavians.

By: Rikke Bjerger Johansen

A new, grandiose holiday resort is about to reach the sky at Jomtien Beach in Thailand.

The extraordinary project is called "The Beach" and will consist of two twin towers with 50 and 60 floors each. The towers will be connected by a sky bridge from the 50th floor.

The main target for the luxurious project of 605 vacation units for sale is Scandinavians. And so far the sale is going great with more than 130 apartments sold already, even though the first brick still has to be laid and the project is scheduled to be finished in the summer of 2011. All buyers are so far Norwegians who have invested in one of the vacation units.

The brain and investor behind the extravagant "The Beach" is the 40 year-old Norwegian billionaire, Arne Hvidsten. With his long, dark hair in a ponytail, casual black shirt and gold jewellery on his fingers and arms he doesn't look like your typical, Norwegian business man. And he knows it himself.

"I like to do it my way. I could easily have short hair, glasses and sit behind my office desk every day. But I want to do things differently," he tells.

And different is also a keyword when it comes to his new project "The Beach". Arne Hvidsten is not modest when it comes to describing it.

" I like to do it my way. I could easily have short hair, glasses and sit behind my office desk every day. But I want to do things differently "

"The Beach is going to be one of the most extraordinary buildings in Thailand. No less than a five star hotel, no less than pure luxury facing the beach front. I promise Grade A all the way through. And I know it obliges in every little detail, from thick, soundproof walls to the speed of the lifts in the high buildings and private jacuzzi or swimming pool on the outdoor terrace," says Arne Hvidsten.

He envisions Jomtien to be Thailand's future Riviera. The area has attracted developments from large hotel chains such as Sheraton, The Marriott, Le Meridien and Movenpick hotels and offers great opportunities for a

good lifestyle with close proximity to restaurants, beaches, national parks, golf courses and shopping. The resort is also located only one hour away from the international airport which gives the residents easy access for travelling to many other places in the region. Everything is perfectly suited for Scandinavian needs. And if someone ought to know what Scandinavians want, it's got to be Arne Hvidsten.

He's currently one of Norway's biggest real estate men and according to a Norwegian business magazine he's worth one billion NOK – a fortune he refuses to comment on himself.



No sleepless nights

However, he doesn't hide the fact that "The Beach" is expected to build and sale for an estimated 3 billion NOK. It's a fortune that could give any investor sleepless nights - but not Arne Hvidsten who bought the 40.000 m2 beach front land on Jomtien Beach three years ago.

"I believe that the quality in my product makes the whole difference. Scandinavians know what they want and know that I can provide it," he says confidently and adds:

"And it's all about location too. Many people can buy an idyllic house on a nice, sandy beach but after some weeks they get tired of beaches and drive to the nearest village with only one little restaurant. Here you have Jomtien, Pattaya, an airport and 20 golf lanes nearby with all the life you want."

His apartments come in different sizes, from 28 m2 studios up to 460 m2 duplex units over two floors. The price starts from 75.000 bath (around 12.500 NOK) per m2 and increases the higher

the floor, which means that the price for a studio starts at around 350.000 NOK.

Most of the 118 m2 units are already gone and the big Norwegian expects to have sold 25 per cent of all units within the summer. The customers who have all put down a 20 per cent deposit up front, are mainly between 35-55 years, including some handball stars from Norway, like Kristian Kjelling.

"Even though it might be more expensive than some other property in Thailand you get