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Koh Samui cracks the investment code



Thailand's top resort destinations have enjoyed a significant return to form this year with tourist arrivals in destinations like Koh Samui and Phuket reaching and even exceeding pre-global financial crisis levels.

Tourism is also driving property sector growth with new projects coming online, some of them carefully designed to match not only an increase in demand, but also a more sophisticated international clientele.

Experienced developers such as Kalara International Properties, based on Koh Samui, have been quick to respond the market's changing dynamics, focusing on quality, but with pricing structures that lean attractively towards foreign buyers. The company's low rise condominium projects have enjoyed particularly strong take up, with developments like Code, a collection of 40 contemporary suites set on a hillside overlooking the island's unspoilt north coast, selling out well before completion with buyers enjoying an impressive 100 per cent return on their investment within a year.

Code recently launched as a stylish boutique resort with an appealing onsite restaurant and spa, plus a range of personalised service options for holiday guests. The combination of chic contemporary design, condominium facilities such as western kitchens, and resort services, is proving particularly popular with independently minded travellers, and by offering the suites for short term stays, owners also enjoy strong opportunities for yields.

"My background is in development and I have always had faith in the fundamentals in Thailand," says Carl Lamb, founder and managing director of Kalara International Properties "Our approach has always been to focus on the strong points like build quality, keeping things small but at the same time offering our buyers and guests accommodation that far exceeds their expectations."

Such carefully tailored approaches to development are what originally inspired Koh Samui's boutique image. As Thailand's resort market matures, positive growth is fast returning to both the tourism and property markets and a more measured approach to development offers visitors and investors an attractive blend of leading edge facilities and appealing lifestyle choices.