

THE BORNEO POST

SATURDAY, MAY 17, 2008

PPH 17/18/2008

THE LARGEST ENGLISH DAILY IN BORNEO

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Sabah/Labuan

Kudat Riviera secures more awards for Sabah

KOTA KINABALU: Exquisite Borneo Villas Sdn Bhd (EBV), part of the Touchdown World Travel Group, and their exclusive Kudat Riviera super-luxury-tourism villa resort in Kudat secured two additional prestigious awards for Sabah last month at the Cityscape Asian Property Award Show, highlighting once again the growing potential and popularity of Sabah in the eyes of the world.

These recent accolades, commending the Kudat Riviera by Exquisite Borneo Villas for two categories, one for Best Developer - Waterfront Development (Future) and the second for Best Developer - Corporate Social Responsibility, join the growing list of accolades being garnered by the Kudat Riviera and setting a path of success for this prestigious tourism development at the northern tip of Sabah.

Other awards achieved in 2007 include two awards from the prestigious CNBC/Daily Mail International Property Awards in categories for Best Architecture and Best Development, and also the Top of the Region - Finest Development in the Asia Pacific Region from Asia Pacific Tropical Homes Magazine. EBV has introduced and pioneered the super-luxury villa market to Sabah's tourism industry with its Kudat Riviera villa resort.

Set to open its doors at the end of 2008, the Kudat Riviera will position Sabah alongside its neighbours Bali and Thailand, who avidly market luxury villas to the high-end tourism market as a cornerstone of their tourism plans.

In fact, Bali, Thailand, the Indian Ocean and Caribbean have offered super luxury private villa estates to the premium top-end tourism industry as an exclusive alternative to hotels for many years, creating successful markets for high-yield, low-impact tourism.

Sabah's Minister of Tourism, Datuk Masidi Manjun said, "The luxury tourism villa market is a great and long-overdue move to help boost Sabah's image and global awareness. As well as filling a missing gap in Sabah's tourism accommodation portfolio, this move puts Sabah on the global map and as a result indirectly helps all sectors of the tourism industry in Sabah from backpacker-level up to our five-star

hotels.

"The greater the awareness for the destination, the greater the demand for all levels of foreigners to visit us, so all players in the tourism industry get to benefit, not only hotels but ground operators, activity and wildlife centres, water sports operators, shops and restaurants to name but a few. We welcome and appreciate EBV's efforts to bring the luxury villa market to Sabah, and see it being the start of a significant uplift in awareness for Sabah."

With the successful marketing of the Kudat Riviera, the global trend of the luxury villa market is now set to boom in Sabah, one of the few remaining destinations that has not capitalised on it to date. Many overseas investors and high-end luxury hotel groups are now looking closely at Sabah to further develop this market, which does wonders for Sabah's tourism industry as a whole.

A spokesperson for EBV said, "The villa market can and should be an ever-expanding one for Sabah. Bali alone has well in excess of 2000 villas, with Thailand closely following behind. While EBV has introduced their first 30 exclusive luxury villas and Nexus Resorts Karamunai has played a role with their investment-home development, there is still substantial room for further growth in this market.

"Great interest and plans are already in place for others to follow suit and Sabah being a diverse destination holds many different location types for villas surrounding the mountain, on islands, Sabah's coastline beaches and in rainforest/wildlife areas.

"It is very important that things are kept focused though. The global target audience for this high-end market is very particular and it is vital that strong environmental consideration and a medium-to-low density philosophy are maintained. It is simply not the case to cram as many units in one piece of land possible for maximum short-term gain.

"The international new-age jet-set simply will not buy them and will not come on holiday to stay in them. The key selling point is the fact that units occupy large areas of private



Kudat Riviera villa resort.

land affording privacy and exclusivity, and that they see Sabah is devoted to protecting and not over developing small areas of land.

"Strong environmental practices need to be in place by default primarily to protect Sabah's natural wonders, but also to ensure the investors and visiting guests are interested in the first place. This has been the backbone of the Kudat Riviera's success to date, as so many destinations have over-developed and the premium tourist now seeks the opposite. It is also vital to have the global sales and marketing ability to sell and rent such villas. EBV is fortunate to have the backing of parent company Touchdown World Travel Group, a European-based global tour operator and tourism marketing company with extensive marketing reach and experience in this market segment in over 70 countries worldwide".

EBV's Kudat Riviera will feature 30 exclusive private villas, complete with private butler and staff, their own private swimming pool and tropical gardens, offering the ultimate exclusivity to guests in Sabah.

Each private villa estate sits on land plots of between 1-6 acres of beachfront, hilltop land and private coves, spread over 6 kilometres of idyllic coastline. Also featuring several restaurants, recreational facilities and a luxury spa, The Kudat Riviera, or "KR" as it is known, has become a destination in itself.

The villa owners are resident overseas and many have supported the Malaysian Government's Malaysia My Second Home (MM2H) initiative. They may visit their residence only once or twice a year, and the rest of the time EBV will manage and rent out their properties to high-end tourist guests as part of the super-luxury KR resort.

A spokesperson for EBV and the Touchdown Group said, "Concentrating on low-impact and environmentally-friendly "responsible" tourism, EBV's tourism villa project prides itself on the use of natural materials throughout, extensive private land plots with minimal number of people per acre and a low-impact footprint on the natural environment. Imagine going to a hotel where your room is 6,000 square feet (a villa) and you have a private pool and garden over an acre in size! Not only that but you have a private butler and staff to look after you throughout your stay, as well as private chefs to cook for you in your villa if you don't want to visit one of the many resort restaurants.

"From KR, guests can charter a helicopter, yacht or four-wheel drive and visit the many other varied attractions of Sabah, including idyllic islands, Mt Kinabalu, Sepilok or any of the other wonders of Sabah. It's the perfect holiday and destination for our esteemed guests".

KR is scheduled to open its doors

Kudat Riviera villa to open end of this year.



to world later this year and with its Phase-One portfolio of seven luxury villas, restaurants and activities/tours and excursions. This will grow over the following 12 months to its full compliment of 30 villas and the Coconut Reef Club Spa.

Already, the Kudat Riviera is becoming a desired place to visit by mega-yacht owners from around the world with its crystal clear waters and idyllic beaches, supported by a luxury resort infrastructure. In the past two months, two such yachts graced the shores of Kudat, enjoying the Rungus hospitality and the fresh fish offered by the local fisherman who enjoy engaging with the international jetsetters on-board the yachts.

The Touchdown Group has placed a massive effort on marketing Sabah as a destination for mega-yacht owners, and sees Sabah as the potential epicentre of the growing popularity of the South East Asian cruising circuit.

Last year, Touchdown brought in and handled seven mega-yachts with a combined value of some USD 100-200 million. Owners and guests on board relax and enjoy the wondrous clear seas and idyllic islands, but also regularly venture ashore to buy provisions and gifts, charter helicopters to take them around Sabah to visit the many tourism

attractions in the State, and more often than not, the owners donate large sums of money towards nature conservation, particularly for the orang-utans and sea turtles.

The greatest benefit is their high-end profile, which provides greater awareness for Sabah as a destination suitable for the rich and famous.

All in all, the introduction of both the luxury tourism villa market and mega-yacht marine tourism industry sector in Sabah benefits the State's tourism industry immensely.

Touchdown has blended the two together to ensure that the needs of the "super-tourists" can be met from all angles - whether for accommodation, yachts, helicopters and for dining, with their restaurants, atmosphere Revolving Restaurant in Kota Kinabalu and the English Tea House & Restaurant in Sandakan. The group's entire portfolio will work in synergy to create an image for high-end tourism for the State and paves the way for responsible and sustainable development throughout the State.

Seen as a prime example of the potential of the Sabah Development Corridor plans, EBV's Kudat Riviera is going to create some big waves in Malaysia, and indeed South East Asia, in the next few years...those mega-yachts better have some strong anchors!