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# Tamarind

## Changing perceptions of Pattaya

By Scott Murray

*Justin Tate knew that if he was going to attract high-quality people to the Buraran Estate and help make it the first 6-star residential development on Thailand's Eastern Seaboard, he would have to build a show home.*

Justin Tate, an Oxford-educated fund manager, was spending his time flying between his home in London and his business in Tokyo when, nine years ago, a friend of a friend invited him to the Buraran Estate in Bangsaray, just outside Pattaya.

During his visit, he joined the owner of the property for a drink at her home at the top of the estate. "It was a beautiful evening," Justin recalls, "the sun setting in a red sky over the hills of Sattahip. The house had the most spectacular sea view. I was gobsmacked."

Noticing this, the owner said, "Why don't you buy some land here?"

"Find me a plot that has the same view as this," Justin replied, "and I will buy it."

She offered him various spots on the property, but Justin was adamant: he knew what he wanted. Three weeks later she called him to say, "I think you'd be a good neighbour," and

offered him the spot he really coveted, right next to hers.

Buraran went bankrupt with the financial crisis of 1997, but such infrastructure as reservoirs and roads remained in place, and all the plots were sold off, although little had yet been built. The original owner did construct two Balinese show homes, however. These were designed by Grounds Kent, internationally recognized architects based in Perth,

whose projects include The Four Seasons Jimbaran, Bali. Justin stayed in one of these homes during his first visit to Buraran, and they provided the inspiration for much of the interiors in his own home, Tamarind.

Over the next three years Justin became more involved in the running of the estate, eventually teaming up with a

fellow resident at Buraran to buy the estate compounds and infrastructure from the original owner, together with many of the plots that had ended up,

*Given that Justin is an avid golfer, the 17 golf courses within a 40-minute drive of his home are a big plus.*





*"Luckily, while I was in Bali I found Fiona de Rose, who became my interior designer. I gave her carte blanche. She brought in the wood furnishings, the white palamanan paving stones, the multi-coloured blue-green swimming pool tiles, the fabrics, the beds, all from Bali."*

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after the 1997 crash, in the hands of the banks and finance companies.

Justin spent a year designing a home for the steeply sloped plot he had bought. He went to Bali and had detailed architectural drawings made. While he was doing all that, he bought a small plot much further down the estate and renovated an existing structure. Then he thought it would be nice to build another house, so he could have friends visit and do some landscaping as well. And then he built a little tower. And soon he decided that was where he wanted to build his primary home, preferring it to the magnificent seaview plot had originally purchased.

He has a big extended family, so he wanted a home that could accommodate all of them. Moreover, he knew that if he was going to attract high-quality people to Buraran and help make it the first 6-star residential development on the Eastern Seaboard, he knew he would have to build a show home. "I'm not on the beach," he says. "I don't have a direct sea view, but I've built this house in the most beautiful tropical garden with lots of space."

The Tamarind, Justin's house, lies on a 400-rai estate known as "Buran", where only plots within one 50-rai area enjoy direct sea views. But what Justin has shown with his home, which is right in



the middle of the estate, is that you don't necessarily need seaviews to create a beautiful environment.

"I knew exactly what I wanted in terms of where to put the pool, how to surround the pool, where to put the gym and the massage pavilion. I knew how to map it out, and getting an architect was easy. I didn't open any textbooks. I knew I wanted wood-shingle roofs (not the usual out-of-place red tiles), as I wanted something that would blend in with the rich tropical surroundings. The difficult part was getting someone to finish it off. Luckily, while I was in Bali I found Fiona de Rose, who became my interior designer. I gave her carte blanche. She brought in the wood furnishings, the white palamanan paving stones, the multi-coloured blue-green swimming pool tiles, the fabrics, the beds, from Bali through Laem Chabang, the deep-sea port 45 minutes from Bangsaray. Allan Chan, my local architect, helped with the design of the house, and I got lucky when I found Sasiwarai, the most brilliant

*Justin and his business partner have sold the bottom two-thirds of the Buraran estate to a resort development company with other projects underway in the Caribbean, Spain and Morocco.*

local landscape gardening company." Fiona de Rose also introduced him to Bali-based lighting designers deLighting.

Justin is not a developer, and has no interest in becoming one. All he wanted was to have his own place and keep it special. He and his business partner have recently sold the bottom two-thirds of the

Buraran estate to a well-established resort development company with other projects underway in the Caribbean, Spain and Morocco. A master plan for this batch of land was designed by WOHA, the award-winning master planning and architectural firm based in Singapore, and it includes a 6-star, 50-room "Banyan Tree-type" hotel (each room is a private villa with its own pool). The rest of the land will feature between 100 and 150 residences. The land title will probably be exchanged by the end of the year, and WOHA's plans are likely to take three years to develop. The people who acquired it bought into Justin's story - they wanted to create the first 6-star





residential development on the Eastern Seaboard, and they used his house as their template.

"The good news/bad news is that Buraran is near Pattaya," says Justin. "When people think of the Eastern Seaboard as a tourist area, they automatically have Pattaya in mind because that's the major resort zone. Hence, those wanting something sophisticated in Thailand normally drift to Phuket or Koh Samui, as Pattaya has always been seen as a seedy destination, not a spot where families would choose to visit.

"But I've always thought from day one that Bangsaray was ideal. I wanted a place near the beach, but not on the beach. I wanted a place with a decent piece of land and a garden, rather than a small little place near the beach. I also wanted something within an hour and a half of Bangkok's international airport. Pattaya also has great infrastructure, great hospitals, great shopping and restaurants that are miles better than anything you find in Koh Samui or Phuket. The cost of living in Bangsaray – staff wages, building costs, golfing, going out to restaurants – are all a fraction of what they would be in Phuket."





Why did he choose to build a second home in Thailand? "The sophistication of Thailand. It has a long history and a deep-rooted Buddhist culture which, for me, makes it a very special place. The Thai people have a degree of gracefulness and courtesy that I think you only find in countries that have self-confidence - you get none of the hardness you find in some of the other neighbouring countries."

Justin plans to spend four months of the year in Thailand. He intends to rent out his home to friends and friends of friends and through suitable agents when he's not there. Given that he's an avid golfer, the 17 golf courses within a 40-minute drive of his home are a big plus.

The Buraran estate is ably managed by Ling Chan, an Australian-Chinese entrepreneur who served as the Bangkok-based chief financial officer for the previous Thai owner. The estate has 24-hour security, with staff trained at the nearby Sattahip Naval Base. Justin's own guard comes on at 6pm and leaves at 6am.

Justin is out to change people's perceptions of Pattaya, and he's succeeding. Spend any time at the Tamarind, and the furthest thing from your mind will be the seedy reputation Pattaya has managed to acquire. You'll just marvel at the design and quality of the estate known as Buraran.

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