

Tropical Living

IN THAILAND

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
DYNAMIC DANISH DEVELOPER

JON PLATE

2009-

what's in store?

16 industry leaders

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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

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ABOVE
Jon Plate
Developer, MODENA



An Obsession for Substance

Danish property developer, Jon Plate, has a passion for what he does. That passion is born of a vision whereby nature and design become perfectly complementary partners.

Jon believes that with his company's flagship project, MODENA Condos in Pranburi near Hua Hin, that vision is in the process of being realised. "We focus our developments in places of natural beauty and tranquillity that provide our residents with a balance to hectic modern lifestyles. The design for MODENA is to create a calming space, a refuge from the pressures of modern life. This escape may be the very definition of luxury."

He further adds that in practical terms, "we specialise in boutique, lifestyle developments differentiated by uncompromising design and high standards of finishing. We strongly believe that a building should be intimately linked to its location, both aesthetically and materially and be as energy efficient as possible in the process."

Pathway to Creativity

Jon's approach has evolved over nearly two decades since his first visit to Thailand in 1990. He first arrived in Bangkok whilst working in shipping for AP Møller. He was immediately smitten. He quickly learned Thai and was one of the originators of the Danish Chamber of Commerce. He stayed three years in the country before moving on as his career progressed. "I have always felt happiest as an expat or when on the move. If I had lived 200 years ago I would probably have been one of those boys who jumped on the nearest ocean going ship in the harbour to go and see the world."







"There is a certain kind of freedom in Thailand... to try new things."

Jon Plate

It being the 20th century, Jon followed the more practical path of completing an MBA at France's prestigious INSEAD Business School in Fontainebleau. He then moved on to a successful career as a management consultant for Boston Consulting Group and later Celerant Consulting based first in Thailand where he helped banks negotiate the choppy waters of the 1997 financial crisis followed by Singapore, the US, the United Kingdom and finally back to Scandinavia.

Already while living in London, Jon knew that he wanted a career change that would employ all his hard learned skills, but take him down a more creative path than management consulting. It prompted him to move

into property development. "Like many Danish people, I am fascinated by design and functionality and the creative and practical processes important in management consulting are fortunately not dissimilar to the ones necessary to become a successful property developer."

Freedom to Create

Jon gets a kick out of the challenging complexity of making projects come to life. "You have so many moving parts and things to consider. I get a kick out of moving a project all the way from the concept stage to the finalized building with people living in it and everything. That really feels like having created something worthwhile."

Jon's first projects were in Denmark but soon after he added ski apartments in Tignes and Val d'Isere in France to the portfolio. Thailand, however, was the place to which he wanted to return and settle in the long term. "There is a certain kind of freedom in Thailand. There is especially a freedom to try new things that you sometime struggle to find in Europe. Here there is an openness towards new ideas and new designs. It's a freedom to explore any vision you might have. To balance that out, there is fortunately also a really strong link between the past and the present in Thai society, I find. Thais seem very aware of who they are and where they come from and that to me is essential in a culture."

*"Thailand is a beautiful country.
I am keen on making a contribution
to keeping it that way."*

Jon Plate



Barefoot Luxury

Jon brought his Danish fiancée, Emilie, with him from Europe to later marry her in the Kingdom. Fortunately persuading her to make the move east was no obstacle since she was as enthusiastic about the Thai lifestyle as he was. Once settled back in the Kingdom, Jon had a clear idea of what he wanted to do with his first project but was not yet clear about where exactly he wanted to do it. Then he came across Pranburi. "It was just perfect for what we wanted to do. I already had in mind the concept of 'barefoot luxury' and here was a place only two hours from Bangkok with sea at your front and mountains at your back, where there was no hint of mass tourism but still with a very well developed infrastructure because of the proximity to Hua Hin. It's the sort of place my friends and I would choose to come to escape the city and the hectic bustle of urban living."

As Jon points out, Hua Hin has long been a favourite with the Bangkok urban elite and is also the site of one of the country's most important Royal palaces. "That history and those connections matter. Hua Hin has a kind of gentility and elegance that is very much the product of its history and Royal associations. Just look at the old Railway Hotel, now the Sofitel. It's one of the most atmospheric and beautiful hotels in Asia. Hua Hin was also the site of Thailand's first ever golf course. In its own quiet way Hua Hin is a very special place."

Although long established as a seaside retreat, Pranburi and Hua Hin also satisfy Jon's desire to keep MODENA Condos close to nature. "It seems different here from the rest of Thailand. The local population as well as Tourism Authority of Thailand are very keen on keeping things the way they are and not making the same mistakes that were made in other parts of the country.



We feel that the most when it comes to the environment. The environmental protection is incredibly strict. There are no short cuts to getting your project environmentally signed off. Buildings cannot be above a certain height, they cannot be too close to the water, you must have adequate fire protection etc.. You combine that with the natural surroundings and you have a sense that there is a real direction and a watchful eye."

Project Portfolio

Although MODENA Condos is Jon's flagship project he is also involved with projects in Phuket through his business partner, Roland Bleszynski. Bluepoint Condominiums is a luxury residential development with spectacular views overlooking Patong Bay.

In line with Jon's interest in the environment as well as an explorer's taste for uncharted waters, he is also involved with a development, at the very early stages, in the historic city of Luang Prabang in the remote hills of northern Laos. "Laos is a very different challenge from Thailand. Of course the Lao government is very different from that of

Thailand in every way. The challenge that I see us having (as elsewhere) is to merge with the existing environmental framework. Luang Prabang is a UNESCO protected world heritage site. An amazingly beautiful and atmospheric place. The challenge is very much an environmental one."

Whichever of his projects he is talking about Jon sees common themes not only in design and context, but also a desire to distil a certain kind of essence. "Obsession with style over substance can only cause diluted or confused thinking. I like substance. Down-to-earth solutions. Maybe it's my Scandinavian nature, but I feel that simple clarity is a virtue all the way from the conceptual stages of a development right through to the point of sale."

In the end, for Jon, it is all about one thing and one thing only. "I want our projects to add to a place and not detract from them. Thailand is a beautiful country. I am keen on making a contribution to keeping it that way."

For more information please visit www.modenacondos.com or contact info@modenacondos.com Tel: +66(0)84 908 4888