



As millions of tourists travel to Thailand each year, imagine being the very first guest to stay at a luxurious resort in a brand new unsaturated location... **Anita Lam** shares her extraordinary experience at X2 Resorts in the charming locale of Kui Buri

# Around The Giant



Owner's Villa



Lobby

**L**ike traveling through remote villages of Kenya during the 70s, hiking through Hokkaido's mountainous cliffs in the 80s or petting a Mongolian yak in the 90s – finding something fresh and untainted during one's travels is a one of a kind life experience. In 2006, close to 14 million international tourists visited Thailand and today millions are still finding their way to the sunny land of beach and sand. Many frown at the thought of holidaying in overly boisterous, highly tourist- developed areas, but as I found in Kui Buri, there are still many places waiting to be discovered amongst Thailand's magical terrain.

### The Voyage to Something New

It was such exciting news to be invited as one of the first guests to stay at X2 Resort (pronounced 'Cross Two') that the three hour long journey to reach Kui Buri didn't even faze me. Located south of Bangkok on the edge of the Gulf of Thailand, panoramic views of salt fields, endless green hills and tiny rural towns revealed a rather sweet side of Thailand that my usual sun-starved, 'let's go to the nearest beach!', self hadn't experienced in a while. As we neared Kui Buri, you can't help but notice fleets of trucks whizzing by in the opposite direction. The south of Thailand is well known for its rich agriculture and fruits like coconuts, pineapples and durian are transported to the city everyday. Three hours away from the big billboards, flashing lights and half-built buildings, the swirly, dimly lit, bumpy road leading to the resort felt strangely comforting.

### Hoteliers' Dream

Some would call X2's owners Anthony and Kaewjai McDonald crazy and others would say they're just simply ambitious. On a trip to Kui Buri to visit relatives, the couple fell in love with its remote and seaside ambience. At that time, only a fisherman's shack occupied the land. They purchased 5 acres of land and the beachfront resort was swiftly built in just 22 months. Having never owned a resort before, they bravely decided to embark on an innovative strategy plan by forming a "Designer Resort" chain. Engaging in contemporary design with the natural land in mind the property has become a member of the worldwide Designer Hotel Group.

### Save The Trees!

The lobby of X2 is sparse with a glossy reception desk and a slate grey, Tetris-shaped seating arrangement - innovatively stuck together by some nifty Velcro flaps. Peering behind the jovial X2 welcoming team, the methodology behind the bare entrance appeared. A giant 50-year-old tamarind tree stood strong emerging as a grand focal point. Refusing to alter the natural land, Thai designer Duangrit Bunnag built around 75 stunning trees on the seaside property with the giant tamarind tree in the centre. I was told that Thai royalty previously occupied the land explaining why there isn't a coconut tree in sight – coconut trees were only grown in the past for revenue.

**“Thai royalty previously occupied the land explaining why there isn't a coconut tree in sight”**

### Step Inside My Chic Little Cave

X2's seamless connection between nature and contemporary design conjures up a sense of attraction. Surrounded by enigmatic, emerald green mountains

# TAMARIND TREE

## Hotel Review



Deluxe Pool Villa



4K Restaurant



Bungalow

**FYI:** X2 Resort Kui Buri is the very first resort to open in the area. Recently, large resort chains have purchased land in the area. So now is a great time to experience Kui Buri's small town charm.



“It’s a fluid kind of privacy without isolation”

Owner's Villa



## More Properties

The owners of X2 Resorts have become quite the entrepreneurs over the last few years. Under the name Astudo Holdings, they currently have three properties already operating with two more resorts in the works.

### X2 RESORTS

There are three X2 Resort locations located in Kui Buri, Koh Kooh and Koh Samui. The X2 Resort in Koh Samui is planning to open Spring 2008 and X2 Koh Kood is scheduled to open in 2009. 'Designed for the spirit' these locations strive to blend nature with design and operate based on unobtrusive hospitality. See [www.x2resorts.com](http://www.x2resorts.com) for more.

### AWAY RESORTS

Opened in October 2007, Away Resorts is located in Koh Kood where it is often referred to as the 'Maldives of Thailand' because of the crystal clear water. It is a 4 hour drive south of Bangkok followed by a 90 minute speed boat ride to the island. Based on the idea of 'slow tourism', anything goes at this rustic island paradise touched by of modern simplicities. See [www.awayresorts.com](http://www.awayresorts.com) for more.

### LE BAYBURI DE PRAN

This property is located in the district of Prانبuri located 2 ½ hours from Bangkok. Opened in July 2007, it features four luxury beachfront villas perfect for family or big groups. It offers fully furnished rooms, kitchen and pool area. See [www.lebayburi.com](http://www.lebayburi.com) for more.

with uninterrupted views of sand and sea, one could foresee Kui Buri developing into a popular holiday destination. Rocks excavated from nearby mountains created the walls for the 23 identical villas. Cleverly designed, the simple box-like structure is a natural wall of privacy without the need for confining fences.

Inside the chic cave are all the modern luxuries one could ask for – a flat screen television, wireless internet, dvd player, a library of the latest music releases on CD and great reads like Murakami's *Kafka On The Shore*. Although three sides are built with the remarkable rocks, a ceiling to floor glass wall facing the shore is mesmerizing. As I lay on the bed, natural light streamed through the edges of the stunningly designed ceiling. The private pool and terrace also upped the ante on this cave's chic-factor. The villas are all connected like a maze with gorgeous Finland pine used on the walkways. It's a fluid kind of privacy without isolation.

### Just Ask

It's not that the staff is ignoring you at X2; they've just been trained to provide all their guests with unobtrusive service. All you have to do is ask and one is greeted with excellent and friendly service – there's

nothing worse than being hassled about towels or wake up calls when all you want to do is relax. Forget about time as well – X2 operates on a concept whereby there is no specific check in/out time, as long as there is a room available, it's yours. For those looking to laze, a gigantic pool is situated underneath yet another magnificent tree. There's also a spa, rooftop yoga space, and sleek spacious bar area on the property. For those seeking a rural adventure, bicycles and motorbikes are also available for rent.

Admittedly as the first guest to stay at X2 it was very interesting. From the gardener pulling out a stubborn weed to the resort manager's exhausted yet genuine smiling face, seeing the design, planning and nitty-gritty details in the works makes one really respect those who create and maintain wonderful destinations like these. Once occupied by Thai royalty, X2 Kui Buri is a modern version of living like a King or Queen.

### X2 Resorts Kui Buri

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## Getting There

Kui Buri is located around 300km south of Bangkok. From Suvarnabhumi Bangkok Airport there are two ways to get there:

**By Car:** X2 Resort offers guests of up to three people with a car service that costs 4000bht, one-way from the airport and 3,500bht, one-way from Bangkok City. The journey takes around three hours. For more passengers, a van can be arranged at an extra cost.

**By Plane:** There are daily flights from Bangkok to Hua Hin (one hour from Kui Buri). The cost is around 3,200bht one-way and 5,900bht return. The flight time is around one hour. For more information see <http://www.huahinairport.com>.

