

Top 5 Tips for Buying a Villa in Thailand

Tip 1: Don't Assume You'll Have Water – Check it Out

Water is in short supply in many areas of Thailand, particularly in the rapidly growing beach resorts. Therefore, carefully check the developer's plans for ensuring adequate water supply:

- **Supply Source:** Does the water come from the municipal water supply system? Can the developer demonstrate to you that the system has enough water to supply the project? Check the area around the project. Ask residents if they have enough water. If you see houses in the area using wells or you see water tank trucks, there is likely a problem. Wells can provide a good supply, but wells can dry up, sometimes quickly. Well water can contain iron which requires expensive treatment to remove. Projects very close to the beach generally can't use wells because salt water from the sea gets into the well water.
- **Water Storage:** Many developers install small storage tanks in each house. This is better than nothing, but it is a low cost approach that may not provide you enough water. A large central storage tank is far better. It can provide greater supply reliability and cleaner water than the individual tanks.



Tip 2: Check the House Foundation – It Can Tell You a Lot

One way for a developer to cut their construction costs is in quality of the foundation – the concrete and steel structure on which your house is built.

Evaluating whether the foundation is good or bad can be difficult, but one simple indicator is how high the ground floor of the house above ground level. If the ground floor is not at least 40 – 60 cm off above ground level, this can mean that the developer cut corners on the foundation.

A poorly designed and constructed foundation can be extremely expensive to repair. It can also tell you a lot about the overall quality of the house. If the developer cuts corners on something as basic as the foundation, there are almost certainly quality deficiencies throughout the house.

Tip 3: Watch Out for Red Brick Construction

Constructing external and internal walls using red bricks instead of high quality concrete block is a tell tale sign of a low quality home. Red brick is a lot cheaper than concrete block, so this is a favorite of developers looking to cut corners. Concrete block is much better than red brick for a number of reasons:

- **Energy Efficiency:** 6 times more insulating capacity than red brick, which can reduce air conditioning by up to 60%. Therefore, you might pay less for a red brick house, but your electricity bills are going to be higher.
- **Safety:** Concrete block has 4 – 8 times greater resistance to fire than red brick.
- **Appearance:** Plastered walls over red bricks are much more likely to crack than homes built with concrete blocks.
- **Sound:** Greater sound insulation, both between inside and outside, and between interior rooms.



Tip 4: Show Me the Blueprints

It may surprise you, but many lower quality homes in Thailand are built without proper architectural and engineering designs. In some cases, no designs at all are prepared; just some basic sketches and then the construction starts. They try to figure it out as they build it. You don't have to be an experienced builder to know that this is a disaster waiting to happen. Ask the developer to see the detailed designs, called "blueprints".

A proper set of house blueprints would consist of at least 50 – 60 pages of detailed drawings and specifications. If you have any concerns, hire an architect or engineer for a few hours to take a quick look at them. Ask the developer if he intends to give you a copy of the blueprints for the home, before construction starts. If he says no, watch out!



Tip 5: Stay Away From Wood Frame Windows

Wood frame windows may look great in a brand new home. However, the wood used for these frames in Thailand almost always warps and cracks within the 1 – 2 years, sometimes sooner. This means gaps in the windows letting in the hot air and noise from outside. In many cases, the warping can be so bad that the windows won't close properly. High quality aluminum frame windows are far better. They'll last for at least 20 years with no warping or cracking.