



# Siam swings

THERE ARE MORE THAN 200 GOLF COURSES IN THAILAND, BUT ONLY ONE HAS ULTRA LUXE TENTED VILLAS BY THE TEES. *Matt Cleary* CHECKS IN TO KIRIMAYA GOLF RESORT & SPA.

BANGKOK IS A SUPER-CITY; A BULGING, steaming metropolis of concrete and clamour in which 9.3 million folks buzz about like white ants in a hive. You can live large in Bangkok, engorged on incredible food, bedazzled by colour, seduced by the throbbing life of one of the world's great cities. It's a funky town.

But when Bangkokians need to immerse themselves in nature, essential oils and a relaxing game of golf, they travel two hours northwest into the jungle, to Khao Yai National Park and Kirimaya Golf Resort & Spa. Our four-man troop arrives after dark, waved through boom gates by smiling security guards in tight grey uniforms and crisp white gloves. We are staying at Kirimaya's newer sister resort, Muthi Maya, which sits on the same 800 acres as the original. Into reception and it's all high ceilings and airy spaces. Given the equatorial humidity, architecture makes use of

what breeze there is. The fittings are of dark brown woods. There are statues of elephants.

We wipe our faces with cold towels presented on silver trays by smiling, bowing, beautiful girls. Garnished with jasmine, lemon-scented, rolled into tubes, they are deliciously cool and moist. They know succour for humidity in Thailand.

We head straight to MYTH, the open-air Japanese and Italian restaurant with 360-degree views of the national park. There we enjoy Singha beer in frosty tall glasses, before a fine meal of gyoza, scallops, wood-fired pizza and succulent chilled shiraz.

A short golf cart trip home and I'm into a forest pool villa, which features a mighty bed, giant bath, tropical fruit bowl, and various, origami-like stylings of fluffy white towel. When I wake as if from coma next morning I find sunshine glistering off a personal infin-

ity pool overlooking thick wetlands and misty mountains. I take two steps out the door and plunge in. It is exquisite. Tranquil, private bliss. I make coffee from the fine machine, and read the *Bangkok Post* on a futon.

The marquee rooms at Kirimaya are four tented villas, 180 square metres of honeymooners' pleasure palace. Like a Bedouin super-tent, they feature an indoor spa pool, top-of-the-range bathroom fittings and a bed the size of a polo field. Each comes with personal concierge and golf cart. It's easily one of the world's best tents.

Nearby Maya Spa has a range of facial, body and bath therapies, the signature being the Kirimaya Treatment, a four-hour session of polyphenols, antioxidants, tannin, vitamin C, vitamin E and the fruit acids found in red wine that exfoliate and rejuvenate one's skin. Another chilled glass of shiraz after-



wards is not part of the therapy, but advised all the same.

And so to golf on the Jack Nicklaus-designed championship layout, one of the top-ranked courses in Asia. We take carts to the first tee where our caddies await us – women in orange jumpsuits with large-brimmed sun-hats, smiling, tilting their heads in a bow, hands together in a praying fashion. We bow back, praying, surprised how quickly it comes naturally.

We tee off – and my drive is hooked straight into the jungle. In the ways of men my friends laugh like the local monkeys, the northern pig-tailed macaque. My caddy places a new ball on the tee. I whack it high and right, and straight into a lagoon. And on we go. Each hole feels like its own theatre of green. You can't see other holes – or golfers – from the hole you're playing. It's jungle-lined with all shades of green, with occasional flashes of red jacaranda.

After 18 fun-filled holes we're back to the clubhouse where we wipe our faces with cold towels, drain beer from frosty tall glasses, and eat pad Thai with chilli. We lean back, order more beer and agree: Bangkok is great. But this is living large.



SWIMMING POOL



TENTED VILLA

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PRIVATE BALCONY



CLUB HOUSE



PLANTATION VIEW ROOM

## STAYING THERE

**Muthi Maya Forest Pool Villa Resort**  
Villas are priced from THB22,000 (about A\$751) per night plus taxes. [muthimaya.com](http://muthimaya.com)  
**Kirimaya Golf Resort & Spa**  
Rooms are priced from THB9,000 (about A\$307) per night and the tented villas from THB33,00 (about A\$1,127) per night plus taxes. [kirimaya.com](http://kirimaya.com)

## PLAYING THERE

Green fees for hotel guests start from THB1,250 (about A\$42) on weekdays and THB1,750 (about A\$60) on weekends. Golf carts and caddies are compulsory and are charged at THB600 (about A\$20) each. Clubs can be rented for THB800 (about A\$27).

## GETTING THERE

Thai Airways International flies daily from Sydney and Melbourne and five times a week from Perth and Brisbane to Bangkok. Return economy fares are priced from A\$949 and business class fares from A\$3,196. [thaiairways.com.au](http://thaiairways.com.au)  
Kirimaya is a two-hour drive from Bangkok.