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DOUBLE VISION: TWO TERRIFIC
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INNOVATION AND INSPIRATION
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EASY RIDER

DESPITE BEING INSPIRED BY A KAYAK ON TURBULENT WATERS, A THAI FAMILY'S WEEKEND RETREAT IN PAK CHONG IS A CALM ANTITHESIS TO THEIR BUSY BANGKOK LIFE.

The house faces to the north so that the family can enjoy the views throughout the day without suffering from the intense summer heat. While the floor-to-ceiling glass windows bathe the entire house in light during the day, in the evening wooden blinds give the family the privacy they need.

Story by Simon Ostheimer
Photos by Pirak Anurakyawachon

Project: Indaree House
Architect: Jeravej Hongsakul, IDIN Architects
Location: Pak Chong, Thailand

Meaning "mouth of the channel", Pak Chong is the gateway to Thailand's untamed northeast region of Isaan. It also sits at the doorstep of Khao Yai National Park, an untouched area of wilderness that is home to deer, badgers, gibbons, bears, leopards, and one of the kingdom's largest herd of wild elephants, which roam the jungle. Because of its proximity to nature, it's also a popular bolthole for stressed-out Bangkokians, who build holiday homes here to escape the urban jungle of the capital.

One such city-dweller is Wittaya 'Eddy' Warunchaichana, who last year commissioned Jeravej Hongsakul, founder of Bangkok-based IDIN Architects, to build his family a getaway. "We looked at their portfolio, and it was very fun and unique - exactly the qualities we were looking for in our holiday house," says Warunchaichana.

Indeed, for the business development manager and his wife, Dr Sutsophon Chuaywongyart, a HR and communication director, the main requirement for the architects was that the house expressed their family's sense of adventure, "especially whitewater kayaking in Nepal, where I asked my wife to marry me," says Warunchaichana.

In terms of the basics, they stipulated they needed a master bedroom, two smaller bedrooms for their daughter and guests, kitchen, living and dining areas, and a rooftop for parties. "The rest we left to IDIN." As the house is a holiday residence, designed to be occupied for short periods as well as for hosting friends from time to time, the design was much easier for the architects. For instance, the kitchen area didn't need to be as large. "Without these factors to consider, I had much more flexibility



with my work. The client just wanted me to design a house that reflected their lifestyle," says Hongsakul. According to Warunchaichana, "We chose to build in Pak Chong because of the nice weather, the fact it's only two hours' drive from Bangkok - we'd be surrounded by nature where our kid can learn the simple life - and, of course, the reputation of Pak Chong as being a slow town, where we could while away our vacation time."

The house enjoys clear views of the pristine area, with full glass frontage exposing the entire interior to the vista. It faces to the north so that the family can enjoy the view throughout the day without suffering from the summer heat. While the floor-to-ceiling glass windows bathe the entire house in light during the day, in the evening wooden blinds give the family the seclusion they need. The original design did not have this privacy feature, but after discussions with the owner about issues of security

when they were not in residence, they were added to the final plans.

The natural environment influenced the design in terms of the home's orientation as well as the selection of colour. The building was designed to face the wind from the south, have open views to the north and south, and let in sunlight from the west. Intriguingly, it was also designed to resemble a kayak floating on raging waters.

While the name of Hongsakul's architectural firm, IDIN, means 'Incorporate Design into Nature', he sought to blend the area's nature with the lifestyle of its occupants. "While sensitive to its surroundings, it should also reflect the owner's personality in the tangible use of space and form." The problem was how to interpret the owner's twin passions of travelling and kayaking. The inspiration for the final design came to the architect from seeing a photo of a kayaker. "The river supports the ▶

Clockwise from top: The three-metre long, reclaimed wood dining table (top) can fit 12 people. View down the central stairwell (above right). The open plan living room and kitchen (above left) are ideal for hosting parties. The house has full glass frontage (opposite bottom), exposing the entire interior at night. The stone wall (opposite top) that surrounds the property.



The master bedroom (left) looks out onto green fields. The colour scheme of the simple yet elegant bathrooms (bottom left and opposite) matches the rest of the house - a combination of light grey, black, and brown-red for the wooden walls, doors and shutters, the latter a choice inspired by the red soil native to the area.



boat to float. For a house, the supporting functions would be living room, dining room, and service areas, with the boat represented by the bedrooms on the second floor." This simple, elegant idea led to the building's final layout.

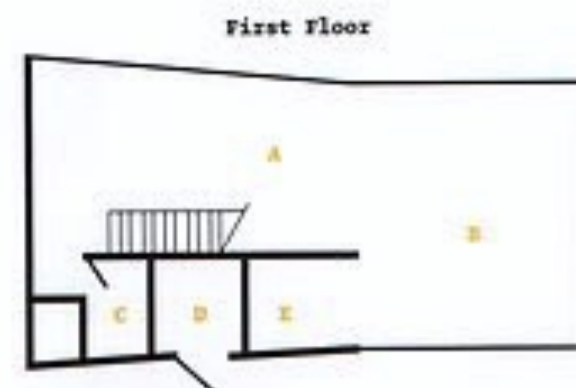
"Kayaking is both a challenging and adventurous sport," says Hongsakul. "The cantilever design of the second floor reflects its dynamics. The architectural implication is that the upper floor 'kayak', where the parents' master bedroom and daughter's bedroom are located, is floating over the living and dining room below." When Hongsakul presented his vision for the house to the family, and how it could represent whitewater kayaking, they were surprised at how he was able to relate their sense of adventure into a design. "His explanation has become the story I always tell my guests," says Warunchaichana. "It is exactly like kayaks on a river."

The colour of the materials used were dictated by the context. The light grey concrete used for the second floor matches the natural greyscale stone wall that demarcates the property's perimeter. Meanwhile the ground level is coloured black-grey to separate the 'boat' from the 'river', ie. the second and ground floors. In addition, because of the red soil native to the area, the third colour used in the palette is brown-red for the wooden walls, doors and shutters. By limiting the colour palette used, the angular building blends in with its muted mountain surroundings.

Despite this, at first glance - with its manicured, green lawn, perfect rectangular wall, and modern dwelling - the immaculate landscape created within the walls stands in an apparent disjointed relationship to the rough scrubland outside. The longer you study the home, however, and take in how the house interacts with the nature surrounding it, the building very much complements its site.

The owners have simple tastes, and accordingly have a mostly clean, minimally furnished interior. If there is one signature piece, it is the custom-made, oversized dining table, produced before the house was even finished. "We let IDIN choose furniture for us from many places, except the dining table, which is our favourite piece by far. It is three metres long and can fit 12 people easily. It was made from reclaimed wood from an old boat - the craftsman did an amazing job."

Having now occupied the house, the family love the interconnectedness of the design, particularly the way the living room and kitchen combine. The open space is also ideal for holding parties, as is the large roof deck with its 360-degree views.



**Indaree House
Floor Plans**

- A Dining Room
- B Living Room
- C Restroom
- D Storage
- E Pantry
- F Restroom
- G Main Bedroom
- H Restroom
- I Bedroom
- J Bedroom

"The Pak Chong house is not like our Bangkok house at all," says Warunchaichana, when asked to compare his two homes. "We would not want them to be anyway, because it would be so boring. With a growing family, it is increasingly difficult for us to have adventures like before, so having a holiday house where it is exciting every time we stay is like an adventure already."

As he reveals, they have already given their Pak Chong house the moniker 'Indaree House'. It's his daughter's name, though she more commonly goes by her nickname Indy, after Indiana Jones.

Would he change anything about the design? "We wouldn't change anything. We are so proud of the Indaree House. Whenever we show picture of our holiday home to friends, they always say that it is such a cool house," says Warunchaichana. "I am very happy too," says Hongsakul. "Not only with the quality of the finished product, but the process from start to finish. When you work with a client who truly understands and trusts in your design, you always produce your best work." ■

