

2-3 APRIL 2016 | THE BUSINESS TIMES WEEKEND

Swing

by sphgolf

Nick FALDO

WHY HIS LAGUNA LANG CO COURSE IN VIETNAM GIVES HIM A 'REAL BUZZ'

KIRADECH APHIBARNRAT

ASIA'S JOHN DALY DREAMS OF DONNING THAT GREEN JACKET

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BY
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A SPECTACULAR CHALLENGE

Every golf course boasts its own particular environment. The links courses of northern Europe feature vast wind-swept fairways, while the beautifully manicured courses of Americas can be a feast for the senses. The forested and hilly courses of Asia provide uncompromising challenges to even the most accurate hitters. But few golf courses give you multiple environments, all in one location.

And that is what is unique about the Nick Faldo-designed Laguna Lang Co.

Sandwiched between the South China Sea's beautiful Lang Co Bay and the mountains of Hai-Yen Pass, this 6,961-yard par 71 course winds its way through forests, across rivers and creeks, over boulders, past paddy fields and is adjacent to the sea. Located within the 300ha Banyan Tree Lang Co resort, this golf course is about an hour's drive north of Da Nang, Vietnam.

Opened in 2013, Laguna Lang Co is the latest of about 10 courses designed by six-time Major winner Nick Faldo in Asia.

Speaking to reporters, Faldo (or Sir Nick, as many refer to him after his knighthood) recalled the challenges of cutting through dense forests, and finding huge boulders which were shown nowhere on his topography map.

"This has been a fun project," he recalled. "I didn't take anything for granted when I came here. I wanted to fit the scale of the project to the lush natural environment and keep everything intact wherever possible. Most courses give you up to three environments, but here you get at least six. The project really gave me a buzz."

Indeed, this fabulous 18-hole course gives the golfer a complete package of all the elements one expects in a challenging, yet beautiful golf course.

Said Faldo: "For example, the 8th hole is one where you are challenged by sand dunes. Then you go to the 318-yard 9th, and play adjacent the beach all the way to the challenging green. The 10th is long and a mix bag of river and reeds. Then



you have to navigate your way around rocks boulders on the 11th."

If there is one, it is the undulations on both the fairways and greens. You rarely get a flat lie. The finishing holes are among the toughest you can imagine. The par-4 17th is long and unforgiving, while the 18th has sand dunes everywhere, requiring very accurate and intelligent shot-making.

But what the golfer will appreciate most is the spectacular, and changing scenery. Low-hanging misty mountain clouds keep the temperature down even on hot days, and the jungle all around provides a constant cacophony of sounds. As you line up your putt on the 14th green, you hear the roar of the beautiful waterfall cascading down a mountainside nearby. Not surprisingly,

Faldo rates this Banyan Tree-owned

three occasions, is also planning to approach the folks at Augusta to get the course sanctioned for the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship, where the winner gets invited to play at the Masters.

Laguna Lang Co is part of the vast and exclusive Banyan Tree Lang Co property, which includes Banyan Tree Villas, Angsana Resort and the golf course-facing Laguna Park Golf Villas, all of which are on sale-and-leaseback to buyers, most of whom hail from Hong Kong, Singapore and South Korea. The properties come with memberships at the golf club.

Besides Laguna Lang Co, the Banyan Tree group also has two other award-winning golf courses in the region: Laguna Phuket and Laguna Bintan, which is currently undergoing a major makeover, under the direction of Banyan Tree's director of golf, Paul Wilson.

(Above) Hole 9 runs adjacent to the beach all the way to the challenging green and, the long and unforgiving Hole 17 (top).

Golfers will be greeted by low-hanging misty mountain clouds keep the temperature down on hot days.



PROPERTIES AT LANG CO

Over the past five years, the central Vietnamese coastal city of Da Nang has grown into a new destination of choice for golfers. The likes of Montgomerie Links and, Da Nang Golf Club have become popular with many golfers from Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan. One of the latest to join the crowd is the Nick Faldo-designed Banyan Tree's Laguna Golf Lang Co.

miniums are priced from S\$500,000 to S\$1 million. Angsana Residences have been selling well to professionals and self-employed buyers across Asia.

At the high end of the luxury spectrum is the Banyan Tree's Hill Villas, which start at over S\$1.7 million. These luxurious multi-bedroomed properties sit on the forested hillsides, providing dramatic views of the entire resort, the golf course, the beautiful beaches and turquoise sea.

What is particularly attractive about Laguna Lang Co is the fact that it sits within the lush and exclusive 280 ha integrated resort in Lang Co, an hour's drive north of Da Nang town, and an hour south of the historical city of Hue. Nestled on an idyllic bay hugging the tranquil East Sea coast, Laguna Lang Co is the first and largest world-class integrated resort in Vietnam.

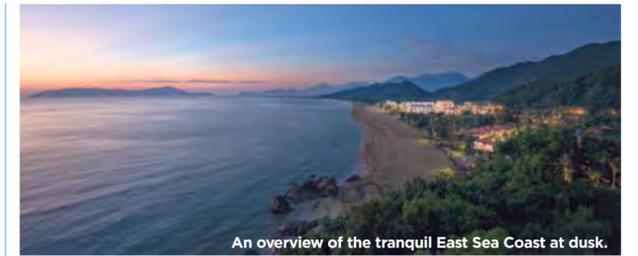
Framed by a three-kilometre beach and lush forests, Lang Co is fast becoming a favoured holiday retreat not just for the discerning golfers, but for those who want to bring their families along for a holiday as well.

According to the Managing Director of Laguna Lang Co, Gavin Herholdt, work on the resort started in 2009, and by 2013, Banyan Tree started selling branded resort properties to discerning buyers from Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan and United Kingdom.

There are three types of properties, depending on the buyer's budgets and preferences. The furnished one or two-bedroom other resorts around the world.

In addition, Banyan Tree is building 58 Laguna Park townhouses fronting the Laguna Lang Co golf course. These start at about S\$374,000 and almost all the first 20 under construction have already been snapped up by buyers.

Under the purchase deal, buyers can participate in the Banyan Tree and Angsana hotel branded rental programme, which will place their properties under its hotel and resort inventory, which also includes the 49-villa Banyan Tree hotel, 229-room Angsana Lang Co hotel, the resort's nine restaurants and bars, convention facilities, award-winning Banyan Tree and Angsana Spas as well as the championship golf course designed by six-time Major winner golf legend Sir Nick Faldo, the brand ambassador of Laguna Golf. Laguna Lang Co currently offers owners a 5 per cent per annum guaranteed return for 3 years as well as 60 days of usage of their properties each year, including 15 days at Banyan Tree's



An overview of the tranquil East Sea Coast at dusk.

Plans are also underway to select other five-star branded hotels which are distinctive from the premium hotel brands of Banyan Tree and Angsana at Laguna Lang Co integrated resort so as to give an interesting mix and choice of accommodation and hospitality touches to the guests.

"The properties at Laguna Lang Co offer investors major capital appreciation potential for years to come as it is a long-term multi-phase development of a world-class integrated resort, the first of its kind in Vietnam," Herholdt added. "Right now, we are in the limited release early phase with reasonable entry pricing and guaranteed returns offered, making this the best time to invest, especially as Vietnam's fast-growing economy is bringing highly attractive investment fundamentals. With Banyan Tree's reputation, you could be assured your property will be professionally managed to safeguard your investment."

Although barely five years old, Banyan Tree's integrated resort at Laguna Lang Co is fast becoming Asia's latest playground for discerning holiday makers who want a combination of both the fun of an exhilarating holiday and the serene intimacy of romance and privacy. And for Singaporean buyers, all this is barely three hours away from home.

"The Banyan Tree Group delivers

unique experiences, giving the properties an advantage in the competitive global hospitality landscape," said senior vice president of Banyan Tree Group and managing director of Laguna Resorts & Hotels PLC, Ravi Chandran.

As a trusted developer in the property market, Banyan Tree had also launched its third brand Cassia in Phuket last October. Nestled in a niche sector between hotel and apartment, Cassia challenges the conventional full service hotel model. Offering affordable one and two-bedroom units with flexible living and dining options, Cassia has been created to bring together investment opportunities for the growing middle-class looking for affordable holiday homes as well as the opportunity to develop an innovative hotel product in the extended stay segment.

"The second project, Cassia Bintan, will be opening in 2017. Steady with its sales, 50% of phase 1 of Cassia has been sold.

An hour's ferry from Singapore, nature and tranquility defines Laguna Bintan. The Cassia ownership which starts from S\$230,000, also comes with a complimentary golf course membership of the soon-to-be newly renovated Laguna Golf Bintan, which offers breathtaking seaviews framed by the South China Sea," enthused Chandran.



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Photos by Laguna Lang Co