

T H A I L A N D

Panya Group



Above: Panya Park Golf Course – Bangkok
Hole 3, Par 3
Left: Panya Hill Golf Course –Chonburi, Hole 17
Tee Shot View



Myriad golf courses have appeared in the last half decade or so, and a bewildering number of golf-related businesses. But for a true golfing organization, look no further than Panya Resort Co., Ltd.. a company with four championship courses under its belt already, and perhaps still more to come.

Panya Group's four courses all have associated real estate developments. The 27-hole Panya Resort, located next to the main road at Bangphra, Chonburi, has been open for some time. With a mountainous backdrop and sea views to the front, Panya Resort is considered a "mature" golf course. Vegetation at the course is luxuriant although heavy rough and dense foliage have been left out to avoid too many golf ball losses.

One of the star features of Panya Resort is the club's surfeit of things to do other than golf. The sports complex, now approaching completion, is one of the best in the country with both lawn and hard-court tennis and a huge swimming pool replete with artificial beach. When

the complex and real estate developments are complete Panya Resort will be a true weekend retreat for Thai and foreign tourists alike.

The other three courses, all designed by **Golfplan – Fream, Dale & Ramsey** - Panya Indra, Panya Hills and Panya Park -- are currently under construction and should all be open at the end of next year. Panya Hills, an 18-hole course set amid the foothills of nearby mountains, is just a few hundred meters from Panya Resort. This course, which is being built separately from its housing development, will feature plenty of mature vegetation including some huge old mango trees.

Panya Indra and Panya Park are both located in Bangkok, the former a 27-hole course quite close to the airport, and the latter a similar sized layout on Suwintawong Road, nine km from Minburi.

Needless to say, all the courses have their own unique style and characteristics, but according to Tony Tonavanik, the last holes of each course section, the 9th, 18th and 27th, are

very challenging, designed to give an exciting end to every game. "With these holes we aimed to create something really challenging to the golfer. They are really gambler's holes, the kind that might finish the game with a handicap-breaking score or could transform a comfortable lead into an overall loss."

Golf course memberships for all four Panya courses sold out like hot cakes – memberships for Panya Park, for instance, went in just two months.

According to Tonavanik, the success came from being in the right business at the right time, the course location is perfect, right next to the highway, and it isn't far from Bangkok. Now the golf business is quite slow. Six years ago there were only about 44 courses around Bangkok, including the nine-hole layouts. Now that number has increased by at least 100 more. I think now there is more supply than demand."

Nonetheless, according to Tony, there is increasing demand from tourists, especially from large groups of golfers who come to the country for short golfing holidays. "We get large groups of golfers at Panya Resort who come to Thailand only to play golf for a few days. They are mostly Asian people with a few US groups. I think the future for this type of tourism is promising. Thailand has the right environment – sunshine and rain to keep the courses in good condition, adequate labor, and good facilities. Perhaps in the future, we can even have golf cities – clusters of golf courses which would cater to large tour groups from abroad." That could indeed be a glimpse of the future for the golf industry in Thailand.

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