

# Bangkok Post

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## Scandinavians like Rayong.

The rising Scandinavian interest in real estate in Thailand, especially in Rayong, stems from the surging arrivals to the country, according to international property consulting firm Colliers International Thailand.

Statistics from the Tourism Authority of Thailand showed that Scandinavian tourists increased yearly from 2003 to 2007, with 17.4% growth last year to 757,734 visitors, up from 645,361 in 2006. The majority were from Sweden with 374,000 visitors in 2007, followed by Finland at around 138,000.

Patima Jeerapaet, the company's managing director, said the interest in Thai real estate by Scandinavians started in 2003 when a pioneering Swedish investor launched a Scandinavian Village in Bangsaen with full on-site facilities for retirees. This paved the way for Scandinavian investors and created an interest for Swedes to own property in Thailand.

Swedes are most interested in real estate brokerage, with 73 Swedish registered companies in Thailand with an investment of around 43.2 million baht.

This is followed by the construction business with 51 Swedish-registered companies with registered capital of 27.82 million baht.

The majority of Swedish investment is in Rayong, representing 34.13 million baht, or 45% of all Swedish investment in Thailand.

The prices of Scandinavian-managed projects in Rayong rang from 38,256 to 85,000 baht per square metre, between 29,412 and 67,144 baht per sqm in Bangsaen and between 38,000 and 95,000 baht per sqm in Pattaya.

The number of residential units developed by Thai-Scandinavian firms also was highest in Rayong with 809 residential units. Hua Hin was next with 468, followed by Pattaya with 259.

The highest sales value from Thai-Scandinavian investors was in Rayong with approximately 4.8 billion baht, or 29% of total Scandinavian project sales value. This was followed by 25% in Hua Hin and 13% in Koh Samui.

Scandinavian developers showed the most interest in Rayong as it's a secure area near Bangkok with no

traffic, no pollution and an expected increase in property values. The main developers in Rayong and Pattaya are Glen Asia and Logans Thailand Co.

One of the major things Scandinavians look for when selecting property is distance from Bangkok. This is noticeable from the strong preference for properties in Rayong, Bangsaen and Pattaya, all of which aren't too far from the Thai capital.

However, the future Scandinavian demand will likely extend to Phuket and Koh Samui, which are very attractive tourism destinations for Scandinavians. Chartered flights also fly to Surat Thani airport during the peak tourism season.

In recent years Scandinavians have been active investors in Thai property, with hundreds of Swedish home buyers spearheading an incredibly strong and growing Nordic property boom in Thailand, Mr. Patima said.

"What is clear is that the trend of owning property and retiring overseas is going to grow in Thailand as the preferred location in Asia", he said.