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# VIETNAM **golf** MAGAZINE

**TOWARD**

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## THE BRITISH OPEN **REVIEW**

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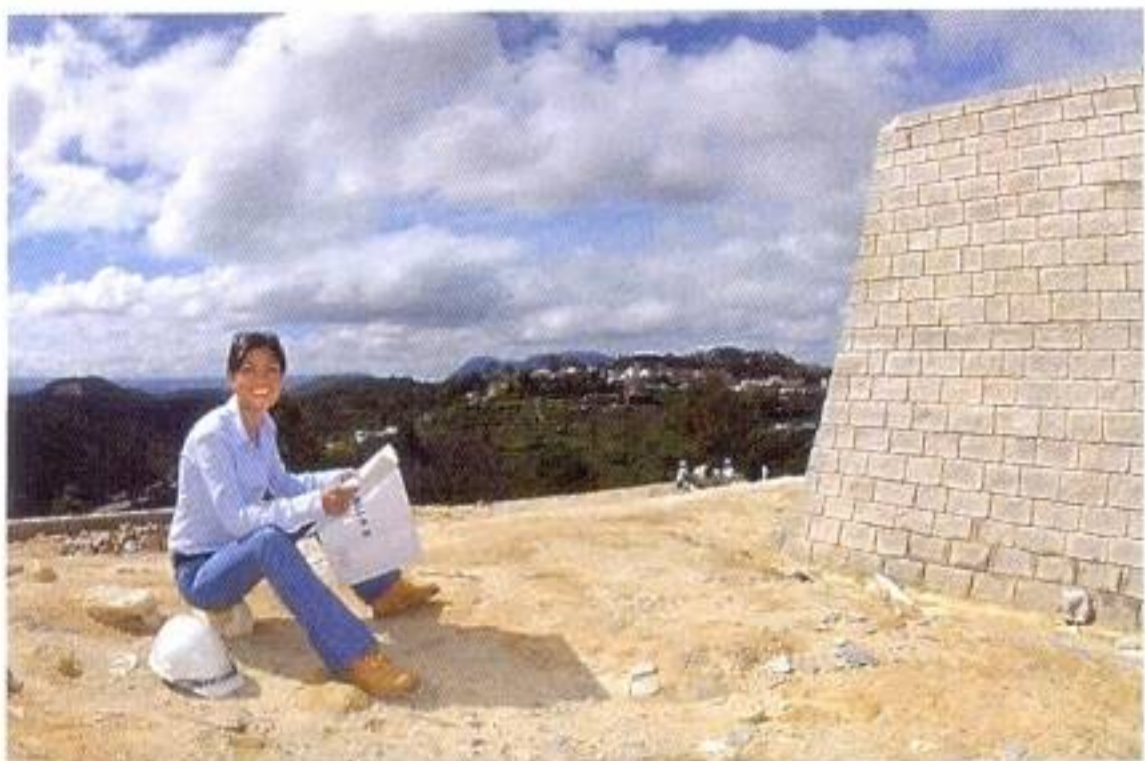


BARCLAYS



# New Day in Dalat

Vietnamese entrepreneur and avid golfer - Le Ngoc Khanh Tam is paying homage to the City of Eternal Spring's heritage with La Vallee de Dalat, an exquisite collection of villas adjacent to Bao Dai Palace II.



By Scott Resch

**Q- You (Tam) were born in Dalat. Why do you still love it so much?**

Growing up in Dalat, I've always loved the cool, fresh air, the pine trees, the flowers everywhere, the lakes, the views, and the fresh food. I've especially loved the changes in climate, with it often being sunny in the morning and then rainy later in the day, leaving a delightfully fresh smell in the air. And I've always liked that Dalat is so much less hectic than many other cities in Vietnam. I've been fortunate to travel a lot. But as I've done that, I've learned there is no place I would rather live than Dalat.

**Q- How does Dalat differ now from when you were a kid?**

When I was a child, Vietnam had not even developed yet, let alone Dalat. Even so, Dalat was unique. It was small, safe and beautiful - like some of the small towns I've seen in Europe. The big changes in Dalat started when the golf course - which had been a public park - and the Palace Hotel and Du Parc Hotel were renovated in the early 1990s. Later, I was able to be involved with the developer of those projects - Danao International Holdings - and that was exciting. Dalat has since become a major tourist destination

with probably hundreds of hotels, lots of supporting development and a worldwide reputation for its unique climate and beauty. It is no wonder Dalat is called the city of love and everlasting spring.

**Q- When did you begin playing golf? What are the best and worst parts of your game?**

My husband introduced me to the game about eight years ago. I first played Ocean Dunes in Phan Thiet. I knew I liked the game right away, but I didn't take it seriously until about three years later. We were very busy when I took up the game and we were traveling a lot. But then as I played more, I wanted to be better, so I started taking lessons in 2010 from a good teaching pro in Ho Chi Minh City and then in Los Angeles. It was then that I realized that with hard work I could play well enough to enter some tournaments. My handicap is now down to 14, but my goal is to get into single digits in the next year. Now that we live in Dalat, we will have much more time to practice and play. I love the game because it is something my husband and I can do together. It also gets me out into the fresh air and it's a great way to get some exercise. I also enjoy the focus the game

requires. My long game is my strength, my short game needs improvement.

**Q- What are some of your favorite golf courses overseas?**

I love playing golf in Hawaii. We often play the courses in Kapalua (on Maui). We've played the Plantation Course, where the PGA Tour pros play every January. That was a lot of fun. I also enjoy Montecito in Santa Barbara. Pelican Hills in Newport Beach is one of my favorites too. But my all-time favorite is Cape Kidnappers on the North Island of New Zealand. It's located in wine country and is consistently rated one of the world's best courses. It's by far the most challenging and fun course I've ever played. I should also mention a gem of a course we found in Kathmandu, Nepal. It's set in the foothills of the Himalayas and you play through herds of deer and packs of monkeys. It's not a difficult course, but it's beautiful and fun.

**Q- Why is Dalat Palace Golf Club still your favorite course?**

First, of course, is the environment. The course is one of the most beautiful in the world. I like to tell people that once you tee off at Dalat Palace Golf club you will forever think about it when you play elsewhere. But also the elevation and layout make it fun and create challenges you don't often find.

Sometimes, because of the elevation, the ball flies much further than you expect. Other times, when the conditions are wet, the ball seems to go nowhere. So it's always a challenge. But in the end, it's the location. There aren't many other places in Vietnam where such a beautiful course sits in the middle of a city. I grew up visiting the park where the course now sits. Every time I play, it brings back

good childhood memories of being there with my family.

**Q- What other courses do you like in Vietnam?**

We've always loved the Nick Faldo course at Ocean Dunes in Phan Thiet. We are members there as well. I also like the design of Greg Norman's course at Danang Golf Club.

**Q- How will the addition of other golf courses in Dalat help the area?**

Ever since Danao purchased Dalat Palace Golf Club, we've hoped for other courses to be developed in the area. Dalat is an ideal golf destination. While the rest of Southeast Asia is hot and sticky, players can fly into Dalat and play in a breezy, pleasant climate. We think that Dalat's developing courses will turn it into a world-class golf destination and further help the local economy.

**Q- In your personal opinion, La Vallee de Dalat will undoubtedly help to generate interest in Dalat as a second-home/retirement destination?**

We are building La Vallee de Dalat because we believe that Dalat is on the verge of a major development boom. It is typical in any expanding economy for second-home buyers to buy first at the beach. This is what has happened in Vietnam. Danang, Nha Trang and Phan Thiet all have significant second-home development. We believe Dalat is next. The weather, the development of multiple golf courses, the new airport, frequent flights from Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and now Danang, and the greatly improved infrastructure and services available are starting to attract home developers and buyers.

What we have done at La Vallee de Dalat is develop a stunningly beautiful piece of

land right next to Bao Dai Palace II. It is quiet, has spectacular views and is the only self-contained, free-hold, private, gated villa project in Dalat.

**Q- How has your appreciation for architecture and design developed over the years?**

Well, first of all, I grew up in Dalat - "Le Petit Paris" as it's also called. From the time I was very young, I loved Dalat's French-influenced architecture and grew up looking at the Dalat Palace Hotel, this beautiful building sitting on top of that hill. So I think my taste in architecture is heavily influenced by that. Then, once I started traveling, especially to France and Southern California, I learned how different architectural styles can be mixed. Our design, for instance, has a strong French style similar to some of the old villas built in Dalat in the 1930s. But it's also influenced by villas I've seen in California, where they often build on the side of a hill or mountain to take advantage of the views. I wanted villas that had both the French influence and the American focus on great views as the centerpieces for the development.

**Q- If you could play golf with anyone, who would it be? In other words, who would be in your 'dream foursome'?**

I would have to say Tiger Woods, my golf instructor and my husband. More realistically, my husband's daughters' partners are both great golfers with single-digit handicaps. One was the club champion at Dalat Palace Golf Club for four years when he lived in Vietnam. And the other is a former teaching pro. I learn a lot by watching them play.

