



PROFILE

## Tiah Joo Kim — The Man Behind the Paradox

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Photos courtesy of Paradox Singapore  
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Tiah Joo Kim is out to change the role of hotels, one Paradox property at a time.

Tiah Joo Kim, the CEO of TA Global Berhad, is a familiar face and name in Malaysia and Canada's real estate scene. Soon enough, you'll hear more about him in Singapore, especially since the group's first property recently opened here – *Paradox Singapore Merchant Court*.

Tiah, who is in his early 40s, is lauded as a visionary and innovator. Under his leadership, the property arm of TA Group has successfully developed an impressive portfolio of urban spaces. Closer to home, Tiah plays an important role in the transformation of Kuala Lumpur's skyline, where he currently spearheads multiple developments that encompasses a total of 162 acres with an expected gross development value of RM 14.2 billion.

Further afield, he is responsible for the transformation of the Trump International Hotel & Tower Vancouver, which has been rebranded as the Paradox Hotel Vancouver.

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**What motivated TA Global to launch Paradox Hotel Group?**

It was very bleak for the hospitality industry when Covid hit. We had to shut down some of the hotels we were managing, while some were lucky to have subsidies to keep them going – but we didn't know how long it was going to go on for. At that point in time, banks were telling us, "Don't worry, we'll work with you," but you can never be too sure until the time is up and you're not in control. As a businessman, I want to be in control as much as possible.

We've been in the hotel business for quite some time – from managing hotels to owning a few hotels as well. So what really sparked the launch was seeing things from both sides: From being an owner to working with a third party. During that uncertain period, we thought it was the best time for us to launch our own hotel brand and do everything ourselves because we needed to be nimble; we needed to be able to make decisions on the fly and do what we want to do because markets were changing so quickly and everything was so fluid. We also didn't want to deal with a management group when it came to approvals or being stuck with brand standards.

**What sets Paradox apart from other hotel brands?**

When we started the Paradox Hotel brand, we asked ourselves: What is a hotel supposed to be? I looked inwards and tried to draw inspiration from my own experiences.

I've always travelled a lot – back and forth from Canada to Kuala Lumpur at least four times a year. In between, I would always stop a few days here and there in various places. I was also at a point in my life where I didn't have enough time to research where to go or what to do. Instead, I preferred seeking out friends in the places I'd be who knew what to do or where to take me. That's how I like to travel because it makes the experience so much more local. When I thought about Paradox Hotel, I wanted to make sure that it was a local champion – it must be a good representation of the city it's in. People travel because they want to learn new cultures, they want to meet new people, and experience what's local. A hotel should be more than just a place for people to sleep in – it has to be a communal hub where locals and people from out of town can come and celebrate life together; celebrate the best of what's available locally in one place. That's what I wanted the hotel to represent.

In life, I feel that when you meet people for the first time, they tend to have preconceived notions of who you are or put you in a box based on what you should be. But there are so many more facets about a person and that kind of ties into our brand name “Paradox” – where things turn out to be unexpected and you get surprised you in a good way. This is where the brand name came from: Celebrating the different aspects and facets of a person. It's a philosophy that we want to put in all of our hotels. When you come and visit us, we really want to get to know you and I want the staff to put in the effort to know more about each guest. I want Paradox Hotel to be your “local hook up”. When you come, whatever you need, we can say, “I'm your guy”.

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**The Paradox brand has grown quickly to be a brand with an international influence even though it was launched in 2022, with six hotels around the world including Vancouver, Phuket, and now Singapore. What drives this growth?**

Every time a brand starts out, it's tough to compete and convince other people to choose you over the bigger brand name. However, you need to have those popular hotels in your own location first to help with organic growth. Organic growth also has to happen in areas that we are familiar with. We look at it in two ways – we know the market and we have a presence there so it becomes easy for us to build on that presence. For example, we now have a hotel in Phuket, so we're working on a deal with Bangkok, which would make sense because the Thai market is now something we're becoming familiar with. Our home base is in Malaysia so it would make sense for us to have a property there because we know the market and the people – it's that organic kind of growth. We are not in a hurry, but we are always looking out for the right opportunity and we need the right team to get it done.

**As a hotelier and property developer, what are some trends for the industry, especially post-Covid?**

After Covid, there's an attitude shift where people think, "Life is short. Take that vacation. Say what you want to say." When people travel now, they realize that memories, experiences, and true connection is what they're looking for, which is why at Paradox, we want to go deeper. We want to understand and connect with our guests.

**In any business, there are ups and downs. How do you deal with the challenges?**

Every single challenge in life will always remain big if you don't wrestle with it. But the more you find out about the problem – the cause, potential solutions, how to fix it – you'll be able to understand it better. In solving any problem, the first step is always getting clarity and getting rid of fear. It becomes less intimidating the more you know about it. After that, you can come up with a plan and execute it as best you can.