

Mega-casa in Mumbai: shocking or sublime?

When is a family-home too big? When it has over 37,000 sq m floor space spread over 27 floors for a family of six? Antilia Tower in Mumbai, the new private residence of Asia's richest man takes luxury and indulgence to a whole new level. It has everyone talking - and not all of it is complimentary.

Imagine living in a house with 27 floors perching into the sky. You have parking space for a fleet of 168 cars, three helipads, your own dance and yoga studio, a two story health and fitness centre and several swimming pools. You can watch the latest release starring Colin Firth or George Clooney with your mates in the 50-seater cinema. Better even, after strolling around the three floors of hanging gardens your friends can all stay over in the many guest suites in your house.

But wait - there's more

The world's most expensive and biggest house also has a ballroom (nothing new there - Buckingham Palace has several). But how many homes can boast an ice room infused with man-made snow flurries; nine elevators in your lobby as well as a one-floor vehicle maintenance facility.

To live in one of the world's biggest homes, you would need a super-sized wallet - first you have to fork out over £1 billion for the land and the construction - then foot the monthly electricity bill of just under £100 000. You'll have 600-strong full-time household staff on your payroll for the upkeep of your mega-casa.

The luxury family-home of Mukesh Ambani, head of a petroleum conglomerate in India is a state-of-the-art structure of stacked glass cubes intermingled with hanging gardens. The house which features green technologies has been designed by Chicago-based architects Perkins+Will who placed special emphasis on Antilia's eco-side.

The splendor and the slums

The architecture has been described as a playful stack of glass boxes with blind walls which breaks up the typical monolithic skyscraper shape into different visual groupings of open and closed volumes with sweeping views of the Arabian Sea.

The over-opulence of this customized skyscraping castle in Mumbai may well be a monument to the head of the household's business success, yet its critics point out the paradox that Mumbai - who is now the hometown of the world's biggest private dwelling - is also home to Dharavi, Asia's biggest slum.

"With such modern technology in civil engineering, Antilia-like structures can be home to at least a thousand people thus making full use of land," a Mumbai blogger writes.

From eco-activists slamming the building's environmental impact for housing only six people to the Indian Navy who's not at all happy with the helipads it should come as no surprise that the world's biggest home would lead to controversy.

Tidbits about Antilia

- Antilia is named after a mythical island in the Atlantic
- It has been described as the 'Taj Mahal of 21st century India'
- Akin to Chinese feng shui, the design uses the Indian principles of Vaastu to maximize 'positive energy'
- Its 27 floors are equivalent to a 60 floor tower
- No two floor plans are alike and the materials used in each level vary widely
- It has been designed to survive an 8-richter scale earthquake
- For more on Antilia's design visit perkinswill.com