

FASHION RESTAURANTS & VILLAS
BALI & SOUTHEAST ASIA

EDITION 11.6 APR - MAY

FRV BALI

DINING

SEMINYAK CAFES, LETTER D
LA RAMONA

VILLAS

WINDU, LULITO, ADASA

FASHION

WATER FALLING, MOONLITE

TRAVEL

LEMBONGAN, JAVA BIKE TRIP
WELLINGTON

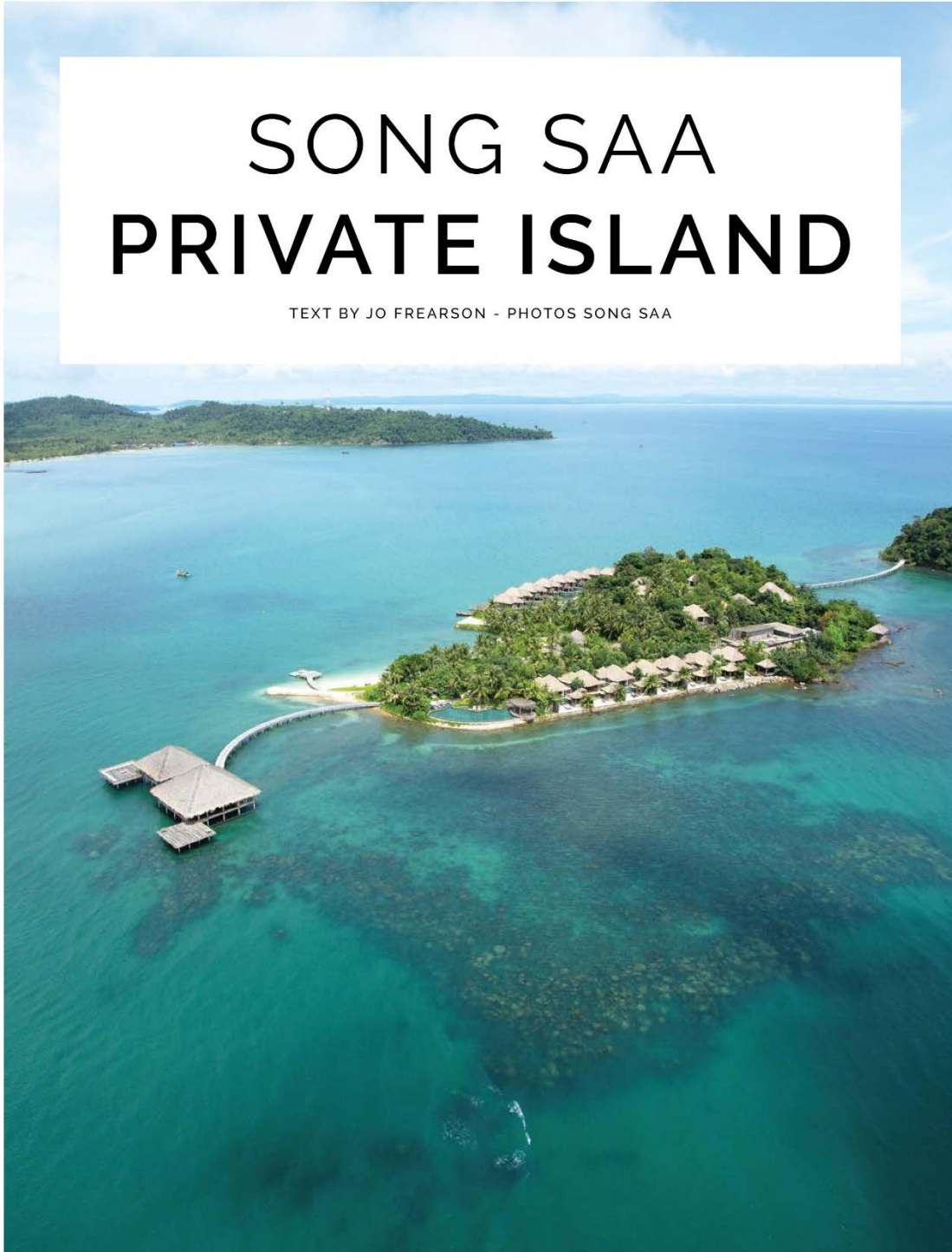


DESIGN FOOD ARCHITECTURE FASHION ART WINE RESTAURANTS

LUXURY LIVING - CAMBODIA

SONG SAA PRIVATE ISLAND

TEXT BY JO FREARSON - PHOTOS SONG SAA



FOR MOST LUXURY HOLIDAY MAKERS, CAMBODIA IS NOT HIGH ON THE RADAR WHEN PLANNING A SECLUDED TROPICAL ISLAND GETAWAY. IN FACT, UNTIL RECENTLY, THE STUNNING AND UNDEVELOPED KOH RONG ARCHIPELAGO IN THE GULF OF THAILAND HAD PRETTY MUCH BEEN LEFT OFF THE TOURIST MAP ALTOGETHER.

Fortunately, this oversight has resulted in a string of pristine isles boasting deserted white beaches, incredible sunsets, lush-green jungle landscapes and crystal blue waters just waiting to be discovered. Hidden amongst them are two tiny jewels, Koh Ouen and Koh Bong, which together form a magical island paradise otherwise known as Sang Saa.

Spotted a few years ago by Australian couple Rory and Melita Hunter, while exploring the region on their honeymoon, the two islands were bought with an eco-resort in mind. Committed to sustainable development, Rory and Melita wanted to create something that fitted with the environment and drew inspiration from the nearby fishing villages, while offering luxury and exclusivity. What transpired is a private island paradise like no other. Song



Indulge in a spa treatment.



Picnic on a neighbouring island.



Enjoy a bath with a view.

Saa, which literally means 'The Sweethearts' in Khmer, may tread lightly in terms of its environmental and social impact, but it will definitely leave a footprint on your mind with an abundance of memories you will never forget. Upon arrival by speedboat from the mainland, guests are greeted with big warm smiles from the barefooted Song Saa family – yes, the General Manager even goes *sans* shoes, perhaps a pair of havaianas at a stretch. This immediately sets the tone for your stay – one of total relaxation without pretention.

After a refreshing welcome drink, you'll be whisked away to your villa. Whether it's a jungle view, ocean-view or over-ocean dwelling you will be fixated by the breathtaking views from your private swimming pool. Beautifully designed with meticulous attention to detail, the villas feature recycled driftwood and local stone to create a true castaway island feeling. The luxurious four-poster beds with soft white sheets and cool grey pillows ensure there's no excuse for a poor night's sleep after sipping champagne in the candlelit bath. Your fridge is continuously stocked with wine and homemade nibbles and the staff are on call 24/7 to fulfil any request. In fact, some guests never leave their rooms, and it is easy to see why.

While seclusion may be tempting, a stay wouldn't be complete without dining at the Vista Bar and Restaurant. Resting on stilts over the water, and accessed by a wooden bridge, this is the ideal place to sink a cocktail or two on one of the suspended daybeds while the sun sets. Come dinner time, experience the romance of fine dining at its best while gazing out to sea. If you are worried you'll be surrounded by other guests, well don't be – Song Saa has thought of everything.



Plunge into your private pool.



Marvel at the driftwood features.

Each night you'll be invited to dine at a different location as part of the island's 'destination dining' experience – whether it's on the beach, sitting over the pool, in the beach bar or in the privacy of your villa, you will be treated to a fabulous meal by one of Song Saa's 21 chefs. Expect a scrolled menu to arrive late afternoon advising of the specials for the evening.

If you are prone to island fever, don't despair, there are plenty of activities to keep you occupied. Join a morning yoga session, indulge in a massage at the spa, work out in the gym, snorkel on the reef or enjoy a picnic on the neighbouring island. What sets this resort apart from other private island resorts is that it's far enough away but close enough to local village life that you can't help but feel you are in Cambodia, rather than just any island out at sea. You will find yourself mesmerised by the daily routines of the fishing boats and captivated by the bright orange robes of monks walking along distant shores.

For those who feel privileged to experience such luxury and wish to give back, they can do so easily. Committed to protecting the environment and educating the local community, Song Saa has developed its own foundation and established the country's first marine reserve. Protect a turtle nest, help to restore a mangrove forest or sponsor a family wellbeing package; it is this underlying philosophy of being in harmony with the natural surrounds which makes this island resort that extra bit special.

If that is not enough to entice you, the island even has its own time zone. An hour ahead of the mainland, 'island time' ensures you get an extra hour of sunlight. I mean really, what more could you ask for? **FRV**

www.songsaa.com



Dine while fish swim below.



Gaze out to sea from your bed.