

ES

Magazine

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OUTSPOKEN
*Model Sam Rollinson
on Kanye, Corbyn
and the catwalk*

HAS GRACE DENT
FOUND LONDON'S
BEST RESTAURANT?

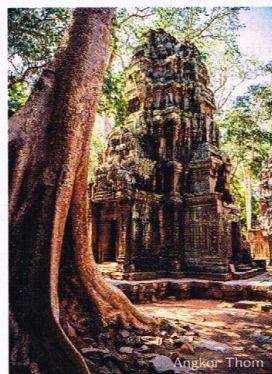
SHOWTIME
*What to see
on stage this
summer*

PLUS: *Meet*
CHANEL's
artisan
ARMY

The
COUTURE
ISSUE

Fashion meets fantasy



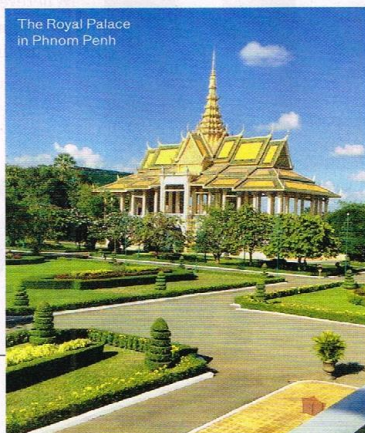


LOVE SONG

Bustling markets, spectacular beaches and tranquil temples. *Katie Lawe* is enchanted by Cambodia



WHAT TO SEE
King Norodom's **ROYAL PALACE** and **SILVER PAGODA** in Phnom Penh, built in 1866, is a must with its immaculate lawns, clipped hedges and not a leaf out of place. You'll feel as if you're in a South East Asian version of *The Truman Show*.



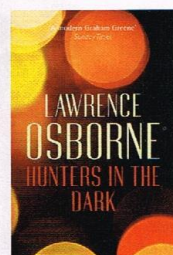
If Robinson Crusoe had decided to build a luxury resort, it might well have looked like Song Saa. Situated on a four-hectare island off the southwest coast of Cambodia, it is an extraordinary little corner of paradise. Arriving by speedboat, after a 40-minute journey from Sihanoukville on the mainland, your first view is of a row of silvery driftwood villas. Perched on stilts above the water, they look authentically native, but are kitted out with all mod cons, not to mention private plunge pools and four-poster beds with high-thread-count linen. The resort also offers jungle villas with their own rainforest garden at the back and views over the bay out front. Standing under a shell-encrusted outdoor shower, you can watch the wooden fishing boats chugging by and imagine you are living in your very own luxe treehouse.

Each morning guests wake up to find a message rolled up in twine, rather than in a bottle,

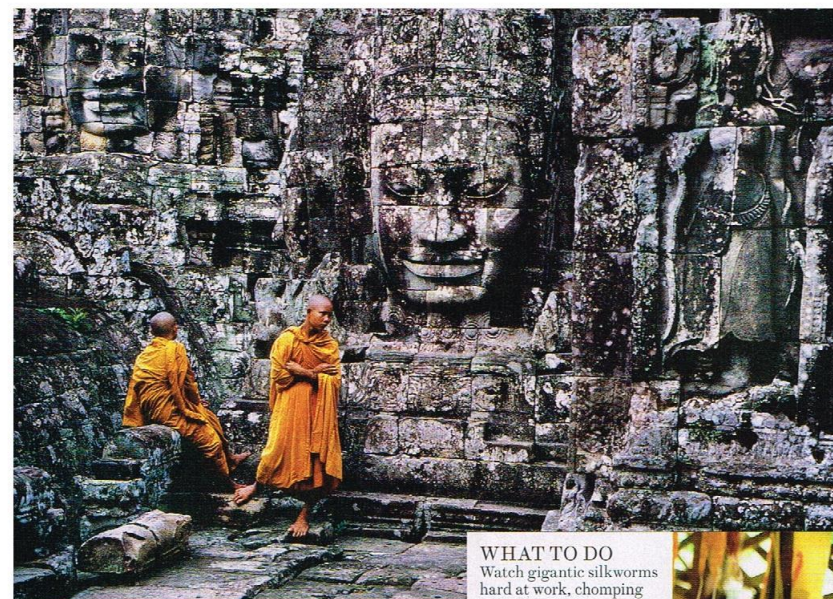
tied to the front door, with suggestions for the day ahead. An early morning yoga session perhaps, followed by kayaking among the mangrove swamps of Koh Rong, or a tour of the local village and an introduction to the Song Saa Foundation's conservation programme, which was set up by Song Saa owners Rory and Melita Hunter to protect the local marine

environment. Lunch might be barracuda sashimi or red curried crab by the pool, before a massage in the spa or snorkelling along the coral reef — although brushing past ctenophora jellyfish (which are harmless but slimy) might put some people off.

Tempting as it is to wallow in this luxury, Cambodia has so much to offer it's worth travelling around. The bustling capital Phnom Penh is a must. Any trip should include a visit to the Killing Fields memorial at Choeung Ek on the outskirts. The legacy of Pol Pot's genocide lingers — it's rare to see a middle-aged (let alone old) person in Cambodia — yet there's a palpable new energy and sense of optimism among



WHAT TO READ
Hunters in the Dark by Lawrence Osborne is a novel that tells the story of a lone Englishman travelling through Cambodia who wins some money gambling, only to find it brings him nothing but bad luck.



Left: Bayon Temple, Angkor Wat

The Angkor Guidebook. To see the celebrated Angkor Wat bathed in moonlight with almost no one else around is well worth the 4.30am start.

Equally rewarding is the forest temple of Beng Mealea, an hour's drive from Siem Reap, where the only sounds you hear are the mynah birds, high up in the spung trees. The ancient walls, which date back to the 12th century, are covered by strangler fig trees and you can clamber over tumbledown stone slabs, some half-buried, their carved details worn not quite smooth by almost a century of neglect. Another

highlight is the small 10th-century temple at Banteay Srei, where flowers and mythical creatures are carved into almost every inch of the rose-gold sandstone structure.

You could spend weeks temple-hopping, but there's much else to enjoy, too. A sunset gondola ride across the enormous moat that encloses the ruined temple at Ta Prohm is magical; a helicopter trip offering aerial views of Angkor allows you to observe the original city layout and its modern irrigation system; you can ride bicycles through paddy fields and temple ruins; or visit the deeply affecting

Landmine Museum. The food — be it hot pancakes at a market stall or the most delicate fish amok at the countryside Villa Chandara — is consistently fresh and moreish. There's no shortage of luxury hotels in Siem Reap, from the sleek but cosy boutique Shinta Mani (which has the most courteous staff ever) to the Amansara (set in a magnificent 1960s building, once occupied by King Norodom Sihanouk). Wherever you stay, a pool for a cooling lunchtime dip is essential; Cambodia is a hot destination in every sense.

CHECK IN

A nine-day trip, including luxury accommodation in Song Saa, Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, international and domestic flights, transfers, guides and entrance fees, costs from £5,797pp based on two people sharing, organised by Jacada Travel, which specialises in bespoke luxury tours to Cambodia (jacadatravel.com; 020 3131 7413)

WHAT TO DO
Watch gigantic silkworms hard at work, chomping their way through mountains of mulberry leaves to produce cocoons that are spun by hand into exquisite golden thread by local village women. The **GOLDEN SILK** factory is on the outskirts of Siem Reap. (goldensilk.org)



WHERE TO STAY

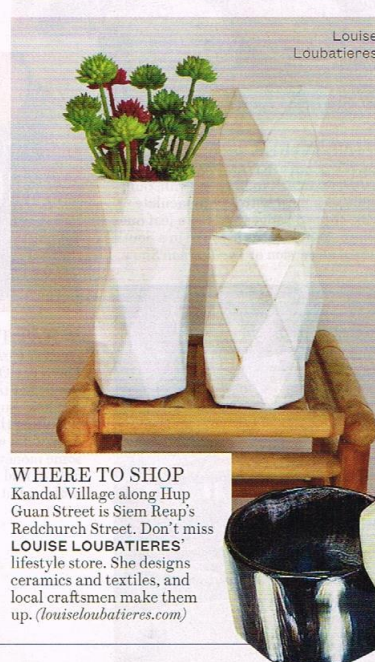
SONG SAA, a luxury resort on a private island in the Gulf of Thailand. (songsaa.com)
In Phnom Penh, **RAFFLES LE ROYAL** is a French colonial gem of a hotel. (raffles.com)

the population. The young tour guides — some local students — are full of enthusiasm for their hometown. After being collected from your hotel, you ride in your own pedal-powered palanquin around the city, ending at the huge Central Market. Built in 1937 and restored five years ago, this is where the textile and fake-gemstone sellers compete for your dollars, next to stalls piled high with crunchy, protein-rich insects, seafood and exotic fruit. People are crammed cheek by jowl at counters, eating bowls of traditional noodle soup. The scent of fish, spices, lemongrass and coconut, of hot and sour and sweet, all mingle together.

From Phnom Penh you can fly to Siem Reap, 320km north of the capital, to see some of the great temples of the Angkorian civilisation. Help in planning your itinerary and navigating the crowds is essential, so do invest in a copy of Andrew Booth's

WHERE TO SHOP

Kandal Village along Hup Guan Street is Siem Reap's Redchurch Street. Don't miss **LOUISE LOUBATIERES'** lifestyle store. She designs ceramics and textiles, and local craftsmen make them up. (louiseloubatieres.com)



Louise Loubatieres