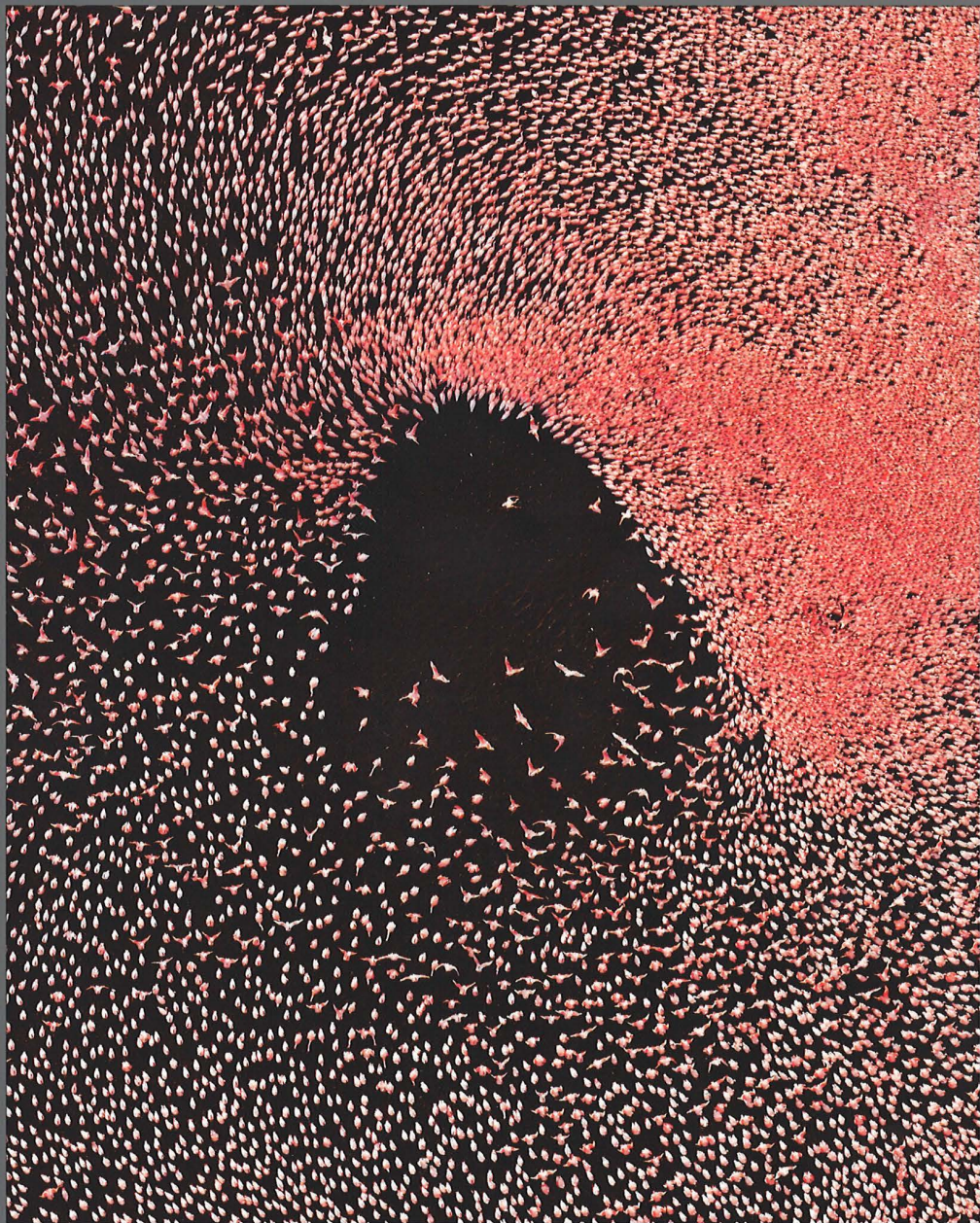


XCELLENCE

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SONG SAA PRIVATE ISLAND

There's more than meets the eye
at one of the world's most lavish resorts

Though certainly not in the running for the world's prettiest city, Sihanoukville's surrounding coastline of white-sand beaches has been attracting sun worshippers and bohemian hedonists for years.

But it is what lies beyond the shores that really captures one's attention – out towards the Koh Rong archipelago, where seclusion beckons. Amidst the warm, azure waters of the Gulf of Thailand, a pair of pristine islets play host to an eco-luxe retreat that proves that glamour and green-mindedness can go hand in hand.



Each villa at Song Saa is its own private oasis, decked out in the finest linens, unique artwork and sleek furnishings



The entire property feels like the epitome of castaway chic, with local materials employed in the construction and the design

rounded off by all the creature comforts a castaway could only dream of: huge four-poster beds dressed in the finest linens, Moroccan lanterns, tribal carvings, oversized baths, private plunge pools, outdoor showers and private decks, to name a few. The two-bedroom jungle villa offers perhaps the most seclusion, perched atop the canopy of the surrounding rainforest, whilst the two-bedroom royal villa is the most indulgent, complete with its own private jetty and nary a boat within sight.

It's no wonder a visit to Song Saa is often the relaxing end to a full-scale Cambodian expedition. Not content to offer either sunrise or sunset views, Song Saa's infinity-edge pool straddles the east and west sides of the island. Guests fill out a personalised form prior to arrival and their meals, mini-bar and activities are catered to their preferences accordingly. A scroll with the evening's menu and where to have it is hung on each villa's doorknob daily – with choice between one of the two restaurants on the villa or

“Song Saa means *hope* to me. For the communities of the Koh Rong archipelago and how they now have a future to look forward to and hope that dreams can happen for us and anyone.” — Melita Hunter

Spanning across the unspoilt pair of islands Koh Ouen and Koh Bong – connected only by a footbridge over a self-made one-million-square-metre marine reserve (a first in the country) – in Cambodia's southern islands, Song Saa Private Island is a secluded escape, just thirty-five minutes by boat from the port of Sihanoukville. Its name is Khmer for “the sweethearts,” so it should come as little surprise that the resort is as seductive and indulgent as implied. Offering virgin rainforest, tropical reefs and glistening beaches, Song Saa is a paragon of castaway chic. The resort's own mantra is “do as little or as much as you

want.” Surely a healthy combination of the two would be best?

Twenty-seven thatch and stone villas dot the jungle or loll above the sea, each constructed from sustainable materials that harmonise perfectly with the natural surroundings without compromising design. Inspired by traditional Cambodian fishing villages, co-founder Melita Hunter chose to include natural elements such as rough-hewn natural timbers, thatched roofs, rustic timber beams salvaged from abandoned fishing boats and old factories and furniture made of driftwood collected from local beaches and coves. Each villa is

The two-bedroom jungle villa offers unparalleled privacy, located above the canopy of the rainforest



private destination dining elsewhere or in the comfort of one's own villa. The kitchens are headed by executive chef Michael Pataran, a Canadian whose cuisine pays homage to Khmer traditions, utilising locally-grown products and fresh seafood from the surrounding waters. "I have always believed that chefs should utilise as much local product as possible, whenever feasible and practical, to offer the diner an experience that is unique to the area or region in question," says Pataran.

At the heart of the resort is the Song Saa Foundation, which pioneered a marine-reserve management programme to protect the Koh Rong archipelago's unique ocean environments by collaborating with local fishermen to promote the sustainable management of marine life. The work of the Foundation can be experienced by kayaking up freshwater estuaries, hiking through the rainforest or snorkelling with the resort's marine biologists. The Foundation also coordinated the largest medical outreach project ever undertaken in the archipelago in collaboration with the US-based organisation International Medical Relief. As a result, the project gave as many as 3,000 people medical attention over a five-day period – the majority of the islands' population. Philanthropy is just one of the activities guests can choose to partake in at Song Saa. The hope that one of the world's most lavish resorts' people have is perhaps the real luxury to be found here.



Below

A stay at Song Saa is not an everyday holiday – every aspect, from the suites to the fine dining on offer, has been planned to perfection

Left page

Local materials are harmoniously complemented by luxurious linens, carefully selected artwork and tribal carvings



Rory and Melita Hunter, Founders of the Song Saa Foundation



The Australian pair Rory and Melita Hunter rented a fishing boat whilst honeymooning in Cambodia in 2005. They spent their days exploring the unspoilt islands in the Koh Rong archipelago, relaxing on the pure beaches, exploring the untouched rainforest. On the last day of their island hopping, the Hunters landed at Koh Ouen. The island was covered in rubbish, as were the offshore reefs, from a fishing family that had been living there for some twenty years. The family offered the Hunters the opportunity to buy the island from them, and they agreed. The two-year removal of more than eighty tonnes of waste from the island to the mainland eventually paid off, and they set out to establish the first marine reserve in Cambodia. Within the year, marine life returned to the surrounding reef. They eventually founded the Song Saa Foundation to do conservation, education and healthcare in the villages of the Koh Rong archipelago. The Song Saa Private Island resort came about as a way to sustain the foundation through guest donations. "We want to make people's lives better," explains Rory.

Luxaviation Travel Tip

Arrive directly to Sihanoukville with a Challenger 350 from our FBO in Bali, Indonesia in 3.40 hours or from Singapore in 1.40 hours.

Contact your local Luxaviation / ExecuJet charter office for more details.