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# Song Saa Resort, Cambodia



An island escape that's half luxury, half nature reserve

by CH Contributor  
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by Joel Porter

Song Saa, a luxurious private island resort in Cambodia, operates with a strict "no shoes" policy. From the moment you step off the speed boat that takes guests from the mainland to the island (a trip that takes about 30 minutes), shoes are cast aside and the rest of the journey includes barefoot walks on sandy paths and across smooth wooden boardwalks that jut out over the ocean.





Song Saa is actually made up of two small islands in the beautiful Koh Rong Archipelago that were bought by an Australian couple, Mel and Rory Hunter and opened as a hotel in 2012. The suites and all hotel activities are on one island while the other is a nature reserve, linked to the hotel by a wooden footbridge. This is just one example of how Song Saa has been designed to exist harmoniously with its surroundings; a deep respect for the environment and community has been a central part of its ethos from day one.



A pioneer for ethical, sustainable tourism in Cambodia, Song Saa has not only created a protected reserve around the island to support the coral reef and marine life (the first such project in the country), they also have a charitable foundation that works on a range of conservation and community projects offering everything from education to medical care to the village of Prek Svay on Koh Rong. Guests are encouraged to get involved; the resort organizes daily excursions to the village and provides you with bags to pick up any plastic you might see washed up on the beaches.





Song Saa is still first and foremost a hotel, a gloriously secluded getaway that offers luxury and the chance to disconnect. There are 24 suites split into three categories: Jungle Villas which are in the center of the island surrounded by trees and foliage, Ocean View Villas which nestle right up to the sea and have a small private beach, and the Overwater Villas, wooden structures built directly over the ocean that come with a glass-bottomed floor and steps right down into the water. All villas come with a private outdoor pool, day bed, huge bathtub, and four-poster king size bed, and in keeping with the Song Saa philosophy, they were all constructed with reclaimed timber and local repurposed materials.



Outside of the villas, the feeling of luxury-meets-zen is continued, whether you want to rise early for yoga classes or spend a

day relaxing by the large infinity pool. At the hotel's restaurant and bar—a large open-air structure on stilts that sits over the water—guests can enjoy a sundowner whilst lying back on a swinging bed suspended by the ceiling before taking up a candlelit table for dinner. There are many Khmer dishes on offer, with a focus on organic produce from the hotel's own garden, plus local fish and meats. From BBQ pork and pickles with rice for breakfast to richly spiced seafood amok curry for dinner, the food at Song Saa is as harmonious as the surroundings.

As a hotel, Song Saa is peaceful and luxurious but it's the underpinning philosophy that makes it feel special.

*Bathroom image courtesy of Song Saa, all others by Joel Porter*



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