




Angkorian Affluence

WHERE TO DINE, DREAM & DISCOVER IN SIEM REAP

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Walk details at Angkor Wat



The iconic faces of the Bayon temple

Stretching from modern-day southern China to the Indonesian peninsula, Myanmar to Vietnam, the Khmer Empire ruled Southeast Asia from the 9th–15th century serving as a basis of art, culture and civilisation for the region. Today, the similarities between artistic traditions, including temple design and dance between Cambodia, Thailand and Laos, are still evident.

Of course, remnants of the empire also include the illustrious Angkor Wat and surrounding temple remains spread across modern-day Siem Reap, Cambodia and beyond. Once the largest city on the planet, Angkor was home to an estimated 750,000 people in its heyday during the 12th century at the same time London had a mere 18,000.

In more recent history, the horror of the Khmer Rouge in the late 1970s still has a grasp on Cambodia, but the resilient country and people continue to look forward and, over the years, have established a particularly flourishing art scene, working to rebuild what the Khmer Rouge wiped out.

Today, artisans and craftspeople are combining traditional techniques with new aesthetics while Khmer hoteliers, chefs and artists are creating experiences worthy of Angkor's legacy.

INSPIRED STAYS

With millions of people making the trek to see Angkor every year, Siem Reap is home to myriad hotel options including several high-end chains such as Park Hyatt, Sofitel, Raffles and Le Meridien. Boutique alternatives, however, offer some of the most unique – and luxurious – stays around with a local touch.

It doesn't take long travelling in Asia to come across a Bill Bensley-designed hotel, recognised by his signature mix of luxury and whimsy. The prolific designer and architect is a key contributor to the Khmer-owned Shinta Mani brand with three neighbouring properties, Shinta Mani Shack Angkor, Shinta Mani Angkor and Shinta Mani



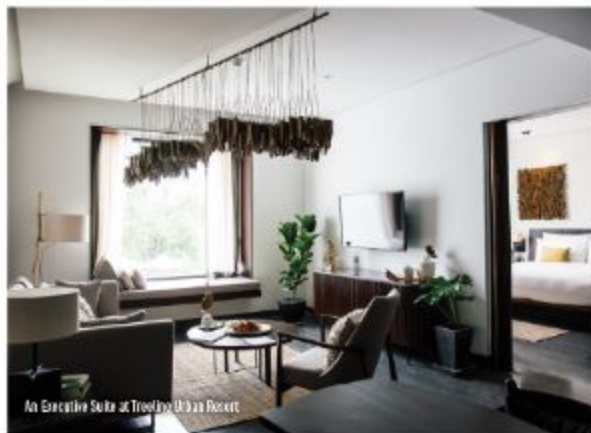
Preserved carvings at Angkor Wat



Delicate carvings at Banteay Srei temple



Shinta Mani Angkor - Bensley Collection design lobby



An Executive Suite at Treeline Urban Resort

Angkor – Bensley Collection, situated near the river. Evoking the lush opulence of the ancient Khmer Kingdom blended with bright pops of colour and sweeping design details, **Shinta Mani Angkor – Bensley Collection** (shintamani.com/angkor-bensley-collection; villas from 815 USD including breakfast) features ten villa compounds each with their own private pool, rooftop *Sky Garden* and indoor/outdoor bathroom. While the surrounds are jaw-dropping – just try to stop staring at the larger-than-life wall adornment that continues from the courtyard into the bedroom – the service is also, unsurprisingly, impeccable thanks to the *Bensley Butlers*. Each villa is assigned a personal butler for the duration of one's stay to assist in arranging anything and everything one could dream of, from dinner reservations to sprinkling lotus petals in the pool. With the *Bensley Butler*, guests can spend more time exploring Siem Reap or simply unwinding in your villa and less on logistics.

For another accommodation option that is completely different in style yet still dedicated to the finer details, the newly opened **Treeline**



Hand folded lotus blossoms



Indoor-outdoor bathroom at Shinta Mani Angkor - Bensley Collection



The tree lined swimming pool at Treeline Urban Resort



An airy and eclectic villa at Shinta Mimi Angkor - Berday Collection

Urban Resort (freelinehotels.com; doubles from 215 USD including breakfast) offers a sleek, serene retreat to counterbalance the heat and hecticness of Siem Reap. The passion project of young Cambodian designer Koh Kang, the hotel pays respect to Cambodia's past as well as its natural beauty while looking ahead to the future and welcoming a new wave of discerning travellers who appreciate minimalist design, contemporary installations from local artists and fresh dining options.

All room categories offer spacious sanctuaries in which to unwind after a long day of temple hopping while also keeping sustainability in mind. No trace of single-use plastic can be found in the guestrooms, including the complimentary minibar which features natural nibbles and filtered water all prepared and bottled in-house.

INNOVATIVE DINING

Khmer cuisine often gets overshadowed by its more globally-recognised neighbours of Thailand and Vietnam. Local chefs, however, along with some imported restaurateurs are putting Siem Reap on the map as a surprising gastronomic destination in Asia. A typical three-day stay in town is not nearly enough time to uncover the town's culinary gems.

Chef Siv Pola returned to Siem Reap after studying overseas to open **Mie Cafe** (secret-retreats.com/miecafe) in a traditional wooden Khmer house originally owned by his grandmother. Combining western cooking techniques with local ingredients and Khmer flavours, his dishes are often simple yet refined fusing together a range of influences, such as a crab chowder made from fresh Mekong crab, coconut cream and emulsion of green peas served with a poached egg. Diners can choose from à la carte dishes for a light meal or select the set tasting menu. Exclusively offering a set menu, **Embassy** (secret-retreats.com/embassy) is run by two ambitious young chefs affectionately known as the Kimsan Twins, features an all-female team focusing on creating traditional Khmer dishes in an elegant dining atmosphere. Flavourful dishes, such as crispy lotus root and deep-fried river shrimp soaked in toasted ground rice then tossed with sweet and sour turmeric dressing, change regularly to match available produce. The intimate restaurant found in the King's Road Angkor market complex, is only open for dinner and often fully booked making reservations a must. Other upscale dining venues for an atmospheric meal include **Cuisine Wat Damnak** (cuisinewatdamnak.com), serving haute Cambodian cuisine created by French Chef Joannes Riviere, and **Abacus** (restaurantabacus.com) serving fine French cuisine in a lush garden or air-conditioned dining room.



Refined fare at Mie Cafe



The devil is in the details at Mie Cafe



Embassy restaurant



A decorative dessert from Embassy



Design and drinks at the Eleven Gallery



Theam's House

INFLUENTIAL ARTS & CRAFTS

After standing in awe at the craftsmanship of Angkor's carved lintels and *apsaras*, travellers can then appreciate contemporary works of art throughout Siem Reap.

As the town's only contemporary art gallery, **One Eleven Gallery** (oneelevengallery.com) is well worth a stop showcasing colourful modern pieces both as part of exhibitions and to purchase. The gallery also serves as the local broker of Siem Reap-based artist Christian Devetter whose vibrant portraits have turned heads around the world. Grab a drink and stay around, taking in the art and meeting the expat crowd that gathers at the gallery every evening.

For a modern take on traditional arts, **Theam's House** (theamshouse.com) slightly outside of town will have you marvelling at the Cambodian artist Lim Muy Theam's use of colour and Khmer artefact collection. Combining a gallery, museum, studio and boutique, Theam's House is an excellent spot to pick up modern handmade souvenirs and décor while **Artisans d'Angkor** (artisansdangkor.com) is the place to go for classic Khmer craftsmanship. The social enterprise trains rural Cambodians in traditional Khmer crafts, such as stone and wood carving, lacquerware, gilding, ceramics, weaving, silver plating and more, then provides fair wages and working conditions. Artisans d'Angkor offers free guided tours in its two downtown showrooms and workshops along as well as at the organisation's silk farm workshop just outside of town.

Regardless of how one chooses to spend their time in Siem Reap, it's sure to be a rich experience.

LIFE IN THE FAST LANE

There are regular daily flights between Bangkok and Siem Reap on various carriers including Thai Airways. Citizens from many countries can obtain a Cambodian visa on arrival at Siem Reap International Airport but those staying at Shinta Mani Angkor – Bensley Collection can opt to fast track their arrival bypassing immigration lines as a hotel representative swiftly arranges their visas – the perfect start to a luxurious journey!

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WHERE TO SHOP
IN SUKHUMVIT
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**HIDDEN ISLAND
ESCAPES**

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