

# AGENDA

THE TRAVEL CONNOISSEUR ■ CALENDAR ■ KEVIN BACON

## Cambodia revisited

*A slew of new hotel launches and luxury experiences has put the Asian nation firmly on travellers' radar again*

The picturesque swimming pool at Belmond La Résidence D'Angkor

SANDWICHED BETWEEN Vietnam, Thailand and Laos, Cambodia has been edging its way back into the spotlight over the last decade. Luxury brands have staked their claim and this picturesque country is in the midst of a tourism boom – but with a respectful, sustainable flair.

#### SMART STAYS

Cambodia is the latest port of call for the Six Senses brand ([sixsenses.com](http://sixsenses.com)), which is setting up home on ridiculously good-looking Krabey Island. Opening later this year, guests will be able to book one of 40 eco-chic villas, each with its own plunge pool. In addition to sleep ambassadors and the world of wellness you'd expect from Six Senses, the green-focused resort will have a chef's table, an ice cream deli and a bar overlooking the glittering Gulf of Thailand. Ten minutes from Sihanoukville, which anchors the country's south-west corner, it's a good base from which to explore nearby deserted beaches, rustic islands and Buddhist *wats*.

Over in Siem Reap, Belmond La Résidence D'Angkor (*doubles from AED 1,305; 00855-6-396 3390, belmond.com/la-residence-d-angkor-siem-reap*) has thrown open its doors. Built in traditional Khmer style on the banks of a river, French elegance mixes with local culture and fine dining in a quiet, relaxed oasis that feels miles away from the bustle of much-visited Pub Street. A private yoga session under the trees is the perfect end to a day of sightseeing.

#### FOODIE EXPERIENCES

Eating local is one of the pleasures of visiting a country like Cambodia. Private island retreat Song Saa has cottoned on to this idea and will further immerse guests in local cuisine with a Khmer afternoon tea that's being launched this summer (*afternoon tea from AED 147; 00855-9-260 9488, songsaa.com*). Guests can pick herbs like Kampot pepper from the island's gardens, then sip on iced tea and sample authentic rice cakes and dumplings, which are cooked in a clay oven as has been done for hundreds of years.

Meanwhile, rooftops in the capital city of Phnom Penh have blossomed into cocktail bars over the last couple of years. Take in sunset over the Royal Palace or the Tonle Sap River from one of these bars, perhaps at Sun & Moon Urban Hotel (*00855-23-961 1888, sunandmoonhotel.com*) or at the recently opened Sundown Social Club (*0085-1-693 6645*).



#### HISTORY, RENEWED

Apart from the pyramids and Machu Picchu, few places have captured archaeologists' imaginations more vividly than temple complex Angkor Wat. In an exciting discovery last year, laser technology revealed that it is far bigger than thought before – less a complex and more an enormous city that, in the 12th century, would have been the world's biggest. Underneath are ruins dating back 1,400 years. Avoid the crowds and go in through the east entrance, working your way west. Or get a different vantage point with a helicopter or balloon ride.

Active types can sign up for the Angkor Empire Marathon taking place on August 6. It starts and ends at Angkor Wat, kicking off at 4.30am so runners can experience the majesty of dawn over the temple. Or test your endurance with a bike ride between

the temple and Bangkok, more than 300km away. Bicycle tour outfit Spice Roads takes care of luggage and accommodation so riders can concentrate on the untouched landscape. *00855-6-396 4323, spiceroads.com*

#### MADE FOR MOVIES

Visiting Ta Prohm temple near Siem Reap is like stepping into a movie. The setting, with trees and creepers surrounding this once lost temple, with its hundreds of carvings and faces, looks like something a big-budget action movie would conjure up. And, in fact, Angelina Jolie's *Tomb Raider* film was shot here, kick-starting the UN ambassador's love affair with the country. Years later she returned to direct *First They Killed My Father*, about the devastating Khmer Rouge era, which releases on Netflix this summer. 🍿

WORDS: GEORGINA WILSON-POWELL; PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES



#### GETTING THERE

Emirates ([emirates.com](http://emirates.com)) flies to Singapore. Connect on Jetstar for onward flights to Phnom Penh. Etihad Airways ([etihad.com](http://etihad.com)) and Qatar Airways ([qatarairways.com](http://qatarairways.com)) fly to Bangkok. Connect on Bangkok Airways for onward flights to Phnom Penh.

**Clockwise from top:** Six Senses is set to open on Krabey Island; afternoon tea at Song Saa retreat; the Sundown Social Club.

**Opposite:** Monks at Angkor Wat