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JUST IN

Experience Cambodia's KHMER HERITAGE

This Page, Phum Baitang
- Terrace Villa **Opposite**
from top, Phum Baitang
surroundings; Shinta Mani
Angkor interior



With architectural and design elements highlighting Cambodia's Khmer and colonial heritage mixed with the contemporary amenities of a luxury resort, **Phum Baitang** and **Shinta Mani Angkor** provide a unique opportunity for savvy travellers to find exactly what they're looking for.

"Phum Baitang means 'green village' in Khmer and this is the exact aesthetic that has been created here at the resort," said Geraldine Dohogne, Concept & Interior Designer with Zannier Hotels, Phum Baitang. "You don't just stay at Phum Baitang, you partake of a visceral experience that embodies all the local cultural senses and transports you back to a true Cambodian village atmosphere."

This atmosphere is enhanced by the use of locally sourced materials, thatched roofs, a natural colour palette, and plenty of rattan, bamboo, and carved stone for most of the resort's architectural design. Phum Baitang pulls the aesthetic together with local artefacts and antiques that reflect the country's colonial history, creating not just a resort, Dohogne said, but an experience.

According to Indra Budiman, General Manager with Shinta Mani Hotels, the property in Angkor was designed by Bill Bensley with inspiration from local temples – giving guests the opportunity to embrace the Shinta Mani philosophy of "open doors, open hearts."

"The colonnade, *prang* (a tall tower-like spire), and enclosures (the spaces between walls, with passage through the walls by way of gopuras) are common structures in temples which are incorporated into the hotel design," Budiman said.

The resorts have not only incorporated Khmer tradition into the aesthetic, they make a significant contribution to the local economy – employing Khmer people, providing healthcare services, supporting Cambodian hospitality training schools, and promoting environmentally friendly and sustainable practices among local businesses and producers.

Shinta Mani's farming development centre, a collaboration with the United States government's Feed and Future Initiative in coordination with the World Vegetable Centre and USAID, aims to "research the best varieties of vegetables to be grown in Cambodia's harsh climate," Budiman said, "and then use that information to teach local villagers to grow their own healthy veggies in their own home gardens."

He added that guests at Shinta Mani's Angkor resort have helped the community even further through a sponsorship program, providing hundreds of Khmer villagers with homes, school supplies, piglets, and more than 1,400 clean water wells.

Still, these properties haven't skimped on luxury. Traditional cultural influences are blended with modern simplicity to provide an exotic and sophisticated travel experience in one of the world's most sought-after destinations. With beautiful villas, Michelin-star dining, custom amenities, Phum Baitang's rejuvenating Spa Temple, and gracious hospitality, guests can enjoy the height of elegance – even while immersed in tradition.

"The key is to be passionate about what you are trying to achieve," Dohogne said. "A one-of-a-kind lifestyle experience that brings together provocative innovative design, simplicity, tradition, luxury and intuitive service, all while pursuing excellence as the driving ethos." zannierhotels.com/phumbaitang/ & shintamani.com/angkor CHRISTINE LEE